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District Superintendent
Eastern Canadian District of the
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Not only is this book relevant to the study of the aging phenomenon present in the Cantonese ministry, it is also a good case study of leadership.

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Rev. Dr. Gerald K. Chan is currently the interim Senior Pastor of the Ottawa Chinese Alliance Church (OCAC). He was originally trained as an engineer and had obtained degrees in Bachelor of Applied Science, Masters of Engineering, and Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering. He had worked in private industry, taught in university, and served in the federal government for more than 30 years. In 2008, he retired from the Communications Research Centre Canada as Vice-President, and responded God's call to serve in ministry. He completed his MTS and DMin degrees from Tyndale Seminary.

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THE TRIBE OF CALEB

Serving in the Golden Years

Gerald K. Chan



基督教加拿大
華人宣道傳道會

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Alliance Churches
ASSOCIATION

SERVING IN THE GOLDEN YEARS: THE *TRIBE OF CALEB*

CONTENTS

FOREWORD by Dr. John Healey

FOREWORD by Dr. Aaron Tang

PREFACE

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION: THE BIRTH OF *TRIBE OF CALEB* PROJECT

CHAPTER 2 – THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

CHAPTER 3 – LIFELONG SERVING FROM THE SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER 4 – PROJECT DESIGN AND DESCRIPTION

CHAPTER 5 – OUTCOMES AND INTERPRETATION

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION

APPENDIX – PROJECT-END SURVEY FORM

REFERENCE LIST

FOREWORD BY DR. JOHN HEALEY

“Serving in the Golden Years: *The Tribe of Caleb*” was written for the pastor who is a day older today than yesterday. Gerald Chan has discovered that men and women in the “*third quarter*” of life can be invited into years of meaningful ministry. He identifies the difficulties of the diminishing number of Cantonese immigrants to Canada, the good fortune of a growing numbers of Mandarins and how this requires a review of leadership strategies in many churches.

Pastor Gerald Chan is a model of his message. After serving in a professional capacity in Ottawa, Canada his retirement opened a door for a new adventure with God. His years of lay leadership at the Ottawa Chinese Alliance Church earned him the trust of others. A call upon his life to full-time ministry in the same church was also a call to retool. Ever practical Rev. Chan dedicated the research aspect of his doctoral program to the question of mobilizing the many baby boomers moving towards retirement. Ralph Winter wrote, “*Most men don’t die of old age, they die of retirement*”. Gerald Chan’s “Serving in the Golden Years” will be both a testimony and an instructional guide as you lead your seniors into some of the best years of their lives. It also serves as a warning of the harm we inflict upon ourselves at any age when we miss living a productive life for the Kingdom of God.

Statistics reveal that someone is turning 60 years old every two seconds! This year 58 million people will celebrate their 60th birthday. Many will believe life is basically over and the next few years are for personal entertainment or to be endured in obscurity. Chan’s research challenges us that retirement is not a time to dread but rather it should be a time of increased opportunity to embrace God’s work as part of the Master’s design for human life. “Serving in the Golden Years: *The Tribe of Caleb*” wrestles with the question of what churches have done effectively to minister to and mobilize seniors. You’ll love his quote from John Kennedy, “*the new face of a growing missionary force has a few wrinkles*”. We must counter the many myths of aging. Chan’s goal is to engage the “*second milers*” as he likes to call them to play a significant role in advancing God’s Kingdom at home and abroad.

“Serving in the Golden Years” tells the story of a pastor’s quest to lead a team of seniors in his own church to impact the church, the community and the next generation for Jesus’ sake. The book is marked with practical counsel and fair analysis as we creatively lead those in the “*third quarter*” of life. Here is the encouragement you need to call a valuable generation of believers to be faithful to their calling.

Dr. John Healey
District Superintendent

Eastern Canadian District of the
Christian and Missionary Alliance
Whitby, Ontario

FOREWORD BY DR. AARON TANG

It is my honour to write the foreword for this book.

I have known Rev. Chan for many years, from serving as an elder to becoming a full-time pastor. Rev. Chan's passion and participation in God's church is evident. His ministry is not limited to the confines of his own church. In addition to serving as a member of the Executive Committee of the Eastern District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, he has served as a volunteer Assistant Executive Director of Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association for a number of years, mainly responsible for the promotion of church planting among Chinese Alliance churches. As a matter of fact, the reason for writing this book is inspired, to a certain extent, by his ministry experience during that period of time.

This book actually comes out of a thesis, which Rev. Chan wrote as part of a Doctor of Ministry program at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. In general, the Cantonese ministry in Chinese churches in Canada is facing an aging phenomenon. Does this mean that Cantonese ministry is a sunset ministry? Does getting old mean waiting for retirement? What is the future of Cantonese ministry down the road? Rev. Chan endeavours to answer these questions in this book. He uses the example of Caleb, along with other studies from the Bible, to bring out an important concept of lifelong serving.

Not only can we continue to serve God effectively when we grow old, but seniors ministry can also provide new opportunities for personal growth, as well as an occasion for evangelism among non-believers. Rev. Chan approaches this study by examining the issue of lifelong ministry first from theological and Biblical perspectives; then he developed a pilot group in his church to test the practical aspects of the study. He recruited a number of elderly members to participate in a seven-month project, in which these participants were given a chance to engage in different types of ministries, including community evangelism, interest groups, preaching and leading worship. Observations, reflections and recommendations were given throughout the process and at the end of the seven months. This book, therefore, is very readable, as well as being practical and applicable, as it is actually an integration of theory and praxis pertaining to a specific ministry issue, all in an effort to seek new insights that could lead to a breakthrough in this area.

Not only is this book relevant to the study of the aging phenomenon present in Cantonese ministry, but it is also a good case study of leadership. No matter whether it is Cantonese ministry, English ministry or Mandarin ministry, Chinese churches in Canada are facing different kinds of challenges and opportunities. Some of these challenges are circumstantial; some are interpersonal. Some arise without any forewarning; some are expected. No matter what, as God's servants, we need to keep our goal before us, and not to be bound by limitations; rather we should continually look for that ray of light that will guide us in leading the church faithfully as we respond to the mission of God.

Since service and leadership are relevant topics for today's Chinese churches, the CCACA requested Rev. Chan's permission to publish his thesis as a book so that fellow co-workers, as well as other brothers and sisters can benefit from it.

Dr. Aaron Tang
Executive Director
Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association

PREFACE

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

This book has been written for those who are facing an aging congregation in a church and are looking for solutions to address the challenge. The *Tribe of Caleb* project has demonstrated success in mobilizing Cantonese-speaking senior Christians to re-engage in church ministries. Even though the work was conducted in a Cantonese-speaking congregation, the principles have potential cross-culturally and are transferable to other ethnic and non-ethnic churches with due consideration given to other factors affecting their ministry context.

MOTIVATION OF THE PROJECT

The *Tribe of Caleb* project was conducted to address a challenge in our church. There was no intention to create a new long-term ministry as we are already occupied with many activities and programs. The project was intended to raise awareness and urgency in the congregation that senior Christians should not give up but step up to serve the Lord in their golden years. It was expected to be a pilot project for only a few months with the intention of instilling in the participants a habit to serve after the project is completed.

The motivation of this work stemmed from the aging situation observed in the Cantonese-speaking congregation of our church in Ottawa. Even though Chinese churches in Canada have been enjoying significant growth over the past few decades, their aging Cantonese-speaking congregations have started to show signs of withdrawal from active church ministry. Many churches, Chinese and not, have recognized the challenge and are conducting programs to serve this growing group of people. Unfortunately, I have come across only few churches which have developed programs to specifically motivate and mobilize senior Christians to serve in their third quarter of life.

The planning of this project took place in late 2012 during the time when I had to select a project for my Doctor of Ministry program at Tyndale Seminary. This work was deemed suitable to be a research topic for my thesis by Tyndale and after two years of research, the thesis was approved.

Using the action research approach, this project conducted monthly worship services, training, and outreach activities to mobilize senior Christians to serve in the local church over a period of seven months. The outcomes obtained through feedback showed that the participants have enjoyed personal growth, been revitalized, and re-engaged in serving in the church and outreach activities. Suggestions for other churches to test-run similar projects are also made.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This book provides a thorough description of the *Tribe of Caleb* project from its initial stage of conceptualization, to its design and details, its outcomes and conclusion. The theological rationale for doing this work, and how society reacts to the reality of aging are also addressed.

This book has six chapters. Chapter 1 reviews the ministry context, the challenges that need to be addressed, the opportunities that lie ahead, the innovation and birth of the project. I have also provided some relevant background information on the age demographics of our church and the shift of Chinese immigration pattern to Canada.

Chapter Two addresses the theological rationale in terms of the Biblical theme and foundation of lifelong serving, together with many examples found in the Bible and throughout the church's two thousand years of history. The importance of finishing well is also discussed.

Chapter Three examines the phenomena of aging and increase in life expectancy, and the reactions of society to aging from the social science perspective, followed by a modern day example of lifelong serving. It then discusses the implications of aging for the church in terms of the opportunities that lie ahead as the congregation continues to age.

Chapter Four outlines the purpose of the project, the methodology of research and methods of data gathering, and provides the initiation, description, and details of the project.

Chapter Five presents both the qualitative and quantitative results obtained through the research instruments of review meetings, survey, and sharing sessions. It also provides key observations of the data and their interpretations.

Chapter Six reviews the viability and worthwhileness of the project, and summarizes how participants had benefited from the workshops and practical training exercises. It draws a final conclusion of the project and also provides suggestions and specific lessons learned in this pilot project for possible future applications in other churches.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would have never been conducted and the work never been completed without the grace of God, as well as the support, encouragement, and prayers of many faithful friends and family members.

I am grateful to my wife, Ada, for her continuous support and allowing me to spend much time working on the project. She was one of the participants of the project and had given me

numerous valuable suggestions. I want to thank my son, Joe, for proof-reading the work and providing suggestions while he was busy with family and work at the hospital.

I am indebted to Dr. Gordon Finlay, my DMin program advisor, for his support, suggestions, thorough and tireless editing and proof-reading efforts, hence making the book a much better product than I could have ever produced by myself alone. I want to acknowledge Dr. Paul Bramer, Director of the Tyndale DMin program, and Dr. Mark Chapman, Assistant Director of the same program, for their advice, encouragement and guidance in the project, and Dr. Francis Tam for his support since the project was first conceived.

I am thankful for my colleagues, the Fabulous Group of Five, at Tyndale Seminary, for their great enthusiasm, helpful comments, encouragement, support, and prayers during our time together.

I must not forget to acknowledge the *Tribe of Caleb* participants, for their unconditional willingness and passionate commitment to participate in the project which they knew little about in the beginning and experienced so much upon its completion. I want to thank the Ottawa Church Alliance Church, for supporting me prayerfully and financially, and allowing this pilot project to be test-run in the church. I also want to acknowledge Dr. Francis Wong, for his experience in evangelism, willingness in leading the gospel outreach training workshop and field trips, and providing the training material.

Finally I want to thank Dr. Aaron Tang, Executive Director of Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association (CCACA), for his vision in seeing this work to have the potential to be a valuable tool for the CCACA churches and his suggestion to write the work of this work into a book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Dr. Gerald K. Chan is currently the interim Senior Pastor of the Ottawa Chinese Alliance Church (OCAC). He was originally trained as an engineer and had obtained degrees in Bachelor of Applied Science, Masters of Engineering, and Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering. He had worked in private industry, taught in university, and served in the federal government for more than 30 years. In 2008, he retired from the Communications Research Centre Canada as Vice-President, and responded God's call to serve in ministry. He completed his MTS and DMin degrees from Tyndale Seminary.

Having served as elder in the OCAC for more than 30 years, Rev. Chan served from 2008 to 2013 at the Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association (CCACA) in the capacity of Assistant Executive Director responsible for church planting. He has served as a pastor in OCAC since 2010 until now.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE BIRTH OF *TRIBE OF CALEB* PROJECT

It was the summer of 2010 when my wife and I went to Newfoundland for vacation. We rented a car in St. John's and tried to travel to as many places as we could in our five days of vacation. On the third day, as we were driving towards Bonavista, we came to Trinity, a beautiful small town. Surprisingly, with a population of less than 200, I spotted a few large, magnificent churches in the community. I ventured into the well-kept, majestic St. Paul's Anglican Church and was quickly captivated by its architecture, woodwork and stained glass windows. A friendly young lady came up to greet me and explained that this had once housed a congregation of over 500 but is now left with about 15 parishioners. They were all in their 70's and 80's. After having a good look at the church, I moved on wondering how much longer could the operation of this large church building be sustained and for how many more winters could a few faithful congregants keep paying the heating bill.

I know I should not be that surprised if I recalled seeing a few large church buildings put up for sale in Ottawa. One of them has a capacity of over 900 and a few others in the 500 to 600 range. What is happening to the Christian churches in Canada? Where have all the parishioners gone? Without new and younger believers adding to the numbers, no matter how faithful the last generation of members have been, one day they will grow old and fade away. No wonder, there are so many church buildings going up for sale across the country.

A TYPICAL THREE-LANGUAGE CHINESE CHURCH

In 2011, at one of the church gatherings, I was somehow led by curiosity to find out how many participants were from the younger generation. So I casually threw out a question at the audience asking for those who were 40 (yes, this is considered as young in our church) and under to raise their hands. To my big surprise, only 5 hands were raised in the group of about 80 people.

This is the Ottawa Chinese Alliance Church (OCAC), a typical three-language Chinese church in the Christian & Missionary Alliance (C&MA) Canada. It has been in existence since 1973, and currently has three congregations using three separate languages: Cantonese, English, and Mandarin, with over 500 people, including children. Over the past 42 years, OCAC has planted three daughter churches in Ottawa. Today, the mother church continues to grow and has a team of six pastors leading the three congregations, the youth ministry, and the children's ministry.

In OCAC, the Cantonese-speaking congregation is the most mature with close to 50% of the members over the age of 55. The congregation can be divided into three groups: The first

group consists of senior Christians (55 years of age and beyond), most of which have been followers of Christ for many years and are the backbone of the church. In recent years, they have started retiring from the secular workforce. Some are still active in the church and willing to expand their horizons to serve, but have not been able to find suitable opportunities to do so. Others have taken a more inactive role and believe that they should retire from church ministry because of their age. There are also an increasing number of new believers that need guidance and training to serve. While many of these older Christians are considering retirement from active ministry, they also represent the challenge and potential of being re-motivated, re-tooled and re-engaged in ministry for the foreseeable future. The second group consists of middle-age Christians. They have now taken up most of the leadership positions in the Cantonese-speaking congregation but they too will be approaching retirement in the not-too-distant future. The third group consists of the younger generation. Only a few of them are serving as leaders, and the majority tend to be very dedicated to their own families and less committed to the church.

The English-speaking congregation is the youngest in age of the three congregations and consists largely of children of the previous generation. From our past experience, we know that after these young people have grown up, some will leave Ottawa to study in other cities and find employment there upon graduation. While they may become involved in other churches elsewhere, our church will not be able to count on their involvement as leaders. For those who choose to stay in town, some have left our church to join a larger Caucasian church. Overall even though the English-speaking congregation has been losing a small number of people, it is still growing. As many Chinese churches are experiencing this phenomenon, church leaders are wondering what is causing this gradual reduction in the number of our young people. Some have argued that it is necessary to plant an independent English-speaking church for them, as this would give them autonomy and opportunity to develop a church that better meets their needs. Currently, the Chinese Coordination Centre of World Evangelism (CCCOWE) is studying this exact challenge (CCCOWE 2014).

The Mandarin-speaking population, in recent years, has been growing quickly largely as the result of a new influx of immigrants from China. This phenomenon is impacting the Chinese churches in Canada in terms of their growth and composition. Because of job situations, many members have to “float around” from city to city. Among them, many are new believers, and it will take time for them to grow in faith and assume responsibilities of leadership.

The current situation of our church family can be summarized in this way: it is as though the Cantonese-speaking congregation are the parents, the English-speaking the children, and the Mandarin-speaking the extended family. But now the parents are getting older, the children have grown up, and the extended family is getting bigger. In my conversations with pastors of many Chinese churches in Canada, I find that the challenges that our church is facing now are similar

to those faced in many of their churches. Today, out of the 90 Chinese churches in the C&MA Canada, 39 of them are a three-language church.

If one was asked to summarize the challenges of a three-language Chinese church today, the three main ones are: the aging of the first generation of primarily Cantonese-speaking immigrants, the development of new leaders from the largely local-born English-speaking next generation, and the need to take hold of the opportunity to reach out to the rapidly growing population of Mandarin-speaking people coming to Canada. These are all important matters that impact the growth of the Chinese Church (the Chinese Church is meant here to collectively include all the Cantonese-speaking, English-speaking, and Mandarin-speaking Chinese churches in Canada). Within the scope of this book, I will only address the first challenge, and by way of this work try to gain better understanding of how to motivate and mobilize this growing group of Cantonese-speaking senior Christians to actively serve in church ministries.

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF OUR CANTONESE-SPEAKING CONGREGATION

So the simple question I threw at the group of 80 prompted me to conduct a simple study on the age distribution in the Cantonese-speaking congregation of our church (Chan 2011). In this study, I was interested only in the Cantonese-speaking congregation, even though we also have the English-speaking and Mandarin-speaking congregations. Since most of our church members go to fellowship groups which are largely organized on the basis of age, a numerical count of the participants in each fellowship group would yield useful information of their age demographics and help us understand their patterns of participation in church life. The study showed that while 75% of the congregation were over age 45, 47% were over age 55. These results, shown in Figures 1 to 3, provide a distribution of various age groups of a total of 180 members in our Cantonese-speaking congregation and their projections over the next 20 years. Without any influx of new members, the percentage of those over 55 will increase from 47% to 70 % over the next 10 years, and to over to 83% over the next 20 years as can be seen in Figures 2 and 3. While no one can foretell the future with total accuracy, these projections do suggest the severity of the situation.

Kirk Hadaway points out that churches that have a higher proportion of members who are age 50 or older have a much slower growth rate than their younger counterparts (Hadaway 2011, 6). In order to counter this phenomenon that may have already happened in our church, it is all the more pressing to motivate the senior Christians to serve actively in the church, especially when the age demographics of the congregation cannot be changed in a short time.

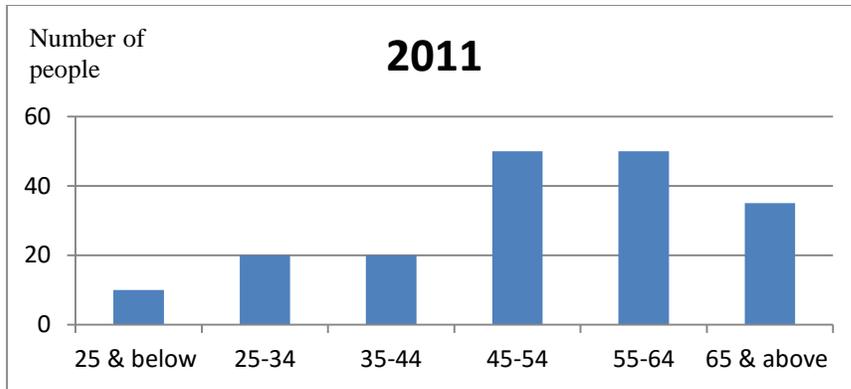


Figure 1: Age Demographics in the Cantonese-Speaking Congregation in 2011 (Chan 2011)

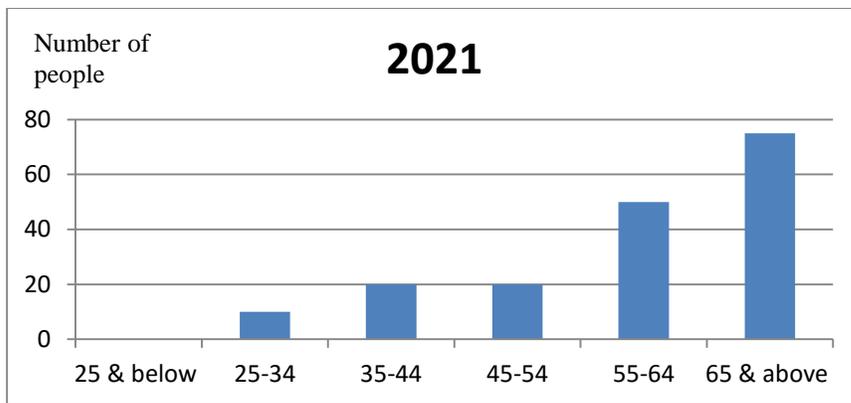


Figure 2: Projected Age Demographics in the Cantonese-Speaking Congregation in 2021 (Chan 2011)

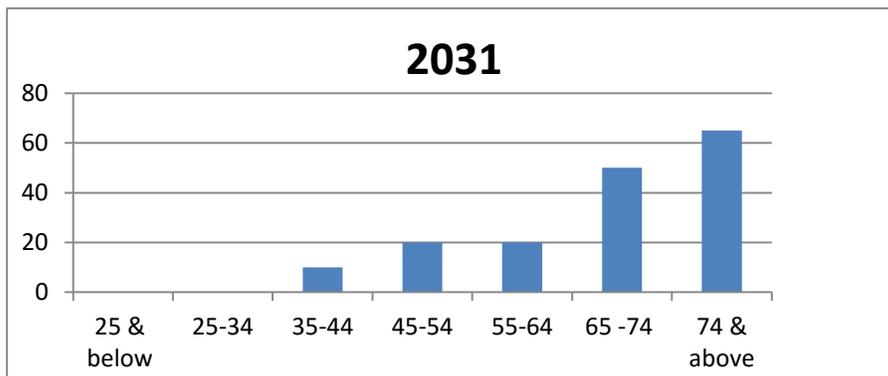


Figure 3: Projected Age Demographics in the Cantonese-Speaking Congregation in 2031 (Chan 2011)

IMPACT OF THE IMMIGRATION PATTERN ON THE CHINESE CHURCH

An important factor that has significantly shaped the growth of the Chinese Church is the pattern of Chinese immigration into Canada in the last 50 years. In the last decade, there has been a shift in the pattern of immigration from the largely Cantonese-speaking immigrants from Hong Kong to the Mandarin-speaking immigrants from mainland China (i.e. the Peoples' Republic of China or PRC in short). This shift is clearly identified in the paper, "Immigrants from China to Canada," authored by Peter Li (Li 2010). He reports that during the period after the Second World War until the mid-1990s, Hong Kong was the primary source of Cantonese-speaking immigrants to Canada. The annual immigration from Hong Kong had been increasing steadily since 1968, reaching a peak of 44,000 in 1994. This was largely due to the imminent expiration of the British Mandate in Hong Kong in 1997. But when the political situation was clarified, the number of these immigrants drastically dropped to less than 2,000 per year after 2000.

In contrast, immigration from mainland China did not begin to increase beyond 5,000 per year until 1989, the year of the Tiananmen Square incident. This was also when Canada started to allow Chinese students with student visas to apply for permanent resident status in Canada. Since then, the number has continued to climb, reaching over 42,000 in 2005, and settling down to about 33,000 in 2012 (Government 2012). These numbers are graphically presented in Figure 4, constructed from data obtained from Li's paper (Li 2010, 2).

The shift of immigration pattern suggests the reason for the rapid growth and then the recent seemingly plateauing of Cantonese-speaking churches during the first four decades of the past 50 years and the emergence of many new Mandarin-speaking churches in the last decade. According to Statistics Canada's 2013 report, which is based on data obtained from the Government census of 2011, there were over 372,000 Cantonese-speaking and 248,000 Mandarin-speaking Chinese in Canada. In addition, there were more than 425,000 Chinese-speaking residents for whom there is no detailed language breakdown (Statistics Canada 2013b). If this immigration pattern continues, there will soon be more Mandarin than Cantonese-speaking residents in Canada.

The Chinese churches in Canada have been and will continue to be affected by such a shift of immigration pattern in a number of ways. First, there will be increasing number of new Mandarin-speaking churches in the country. Second, within a local Chinese church, the ratio of Mandarin-speaking to Cantonese-speaking members will continue to increase. Third, the average age of Cantonese-speaking members will continue to rise due to the decreasing number of younger Cantonese-speaking people immigrating to Canada. Currently, in our church we have about 180 to 200 people in the Cantonese-speaking congregation and about 100 in the Mandarin-speaking congregation. We expect the Mandarin-speaking congregation to surpass the Cantonese-speaking congregation in numbers over the next 5-10 years.

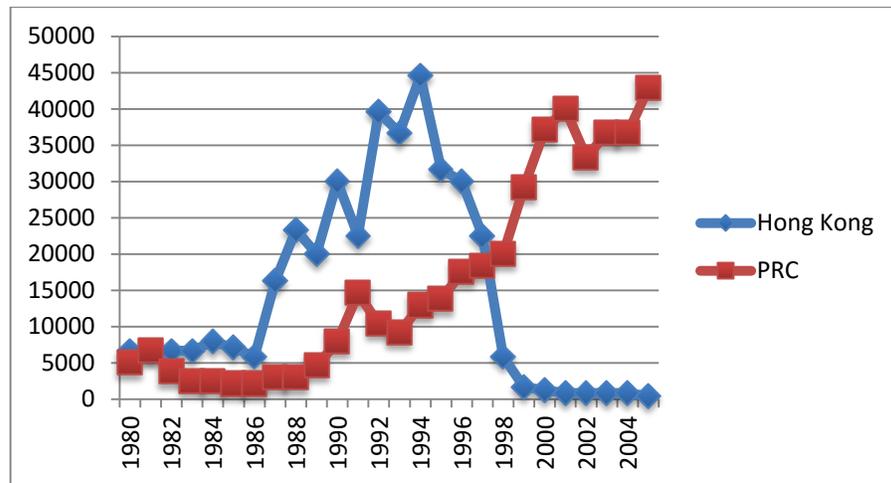


Figure 4: Landed Immigrants in Canada by Year From Mainland China and Hong Kong, 1980-2005 (Li 2010, 2)

FUTURE OF THE CANTONESE-SPEAKING CHURCH

So is the Cantonese-speaking Church slowly shrinking? Could what has happened to those magnificent large churches in the past happen to the Cantonese-speaking Church in the future? Someone had said: the Cantonese-speaking Church is a sunset church.

This is a good question: Is the Cantonese-speaking Church in Canada a sunset church? Since God had blessed the Chinese Church so abundantly in the past five decades, its demise would never happen, someone argued. Indeed, just in the C&MA Canada alone, the growth has been phenomenal. From the first Chinese Alliance Church in Regina in 1962, it has grown to about 90 Chinese churches across the country today (CCACA 2014; Reynolds 1992, 131). But can the glorious past guarantee a rosy future?

Others suggested that this phenomenon would not happen to a Cantonese-speaking Church because currently there are still many Cantonese-speaking people in Canada. Most of them are non-believers and can become future members of the Cantonese-speaking Church. We only need to reach out to these people and the congregation will continue to grow. However, we know that without new immigrants, one day the Cantonese-speaking population will dwindle down to a very small number since the children of this group of people are locally raised and largely speak English (or French) and not Cantonese, as we all know.

Certainly, it is true that many immigrants from mainland China could still come from the southern part of the country. They speak Cantonese and can fill some of the void left behind by

the once populous Cantonese-speaking immigrants from Hong Kong. But without such new immigrants continuing to come to the country, it is likely that the Cantonese-speaking Church will head towards a sunset destiny over the next thirty to fifty years.

It would be safe to say that the Cantonese-speaking church will not totally disappear, but could significantly reduce in number and size. This had been true for some other ethnic churches in Canada over the past hundred years. The Cantonese-speaking church is only one of these many such churches in the time-line of recent history. One may find the future of the Hakka-speaking church (Hakka is a Chinese dialect) unfolding as such an example.

The only Hakka-speaking church in Canada was planted in Toronto a few years ago because of the presence of a good number of Hakka speaking people in Toronto. The church has now grown to over 50 people, mostly senior Christians. However it is not expected that many more Hakka speaking people will migrate to Canada in the foreseeable future. Over time, the population of such a group of people will fade away. God is indeed providing a window of opportunity within which the gospel could be shared to many of these people who are living in Toronto for a period of a few decades.

What is happening to the Hakka-speaking church could very well happen to the Cantonese-speaking Church, only at a much larger scale and over a longer time-frame. In the course of history, we have seen churches being phased out over time, only to be replaced by other growing and more vibrant churches. As Matthew 16:18 says, “The gates of Hades will not overcome the church.” Also “unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” (John 12:24) If the current immigration pattern continues, the Cantonese-speaking church may just fade away, to be replaced by the growing Mandarin-speaking Church and English-speaking Church in the future. It is true that there are many more years before this would happen. The question to ask is what should the Cantonese-speaking Church do now? There is a window of opportunity of a few years in front of us. What can we do now?

LIFE BEYOND THE PLATEAU

The study on church growth suggests that, like many other phenomena, the growth of a church follows the sigmoid curve as shown in Figure 5 (Malphurs 1999, 51). The curve represents a process of birth, growth, plateauing, decline, and finally death. In order to prevent decline and subsequent demise, something must be done between X and Y (see Figure 5) to turn it around so as to start the process of growth again. Since both the English-speaking and Mandarin-speaking congregations are both growing, the Cantonese-speaking congregation, with its maturity, experience, and giftedness, should take hold of this opportunity to help these two

congregations grow within the Chinese Church. But they themselves must first be motivated to continue to strive forward into new heights and not fade into obscurity.

In early 2012, while we were in the process of developing new strategies for OCAC, it was apparent to us that our church was at a cross-roads. We have had a history of about 40 years, a good-size congregation, steady growth and stability. We came to realize that what we chose to do in the next 5 years would be crucial in determining what the church would look like in the long run. We might have reached a plateau, and if so, in order to move ahead, we would need to introduce some changes (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006, 9-10, 23-24; Quinn 1996, 18-25). Based on our observations over the years, the church needed some clear direction in the form of a plan or strategies as suggested by Bobb Biehl (Biehl 1997, 19). As a result, the leaders over a period of about a year prayed, brain-stormed, discussed, and developed a set of five-year strategies to address the opportunities we were facing. The intention of these strategies was to highlight a renewed vision to reflect our key values, outline a direction forward, create a broader mindset, and encourage people to step out of their comfort zones to serve. After many discussions, the Board of Elders adopted these strategies as the OCAC Five-Year Strategies in late 2012 and started to implement them in the beginning of 2013 (Chan 2013).

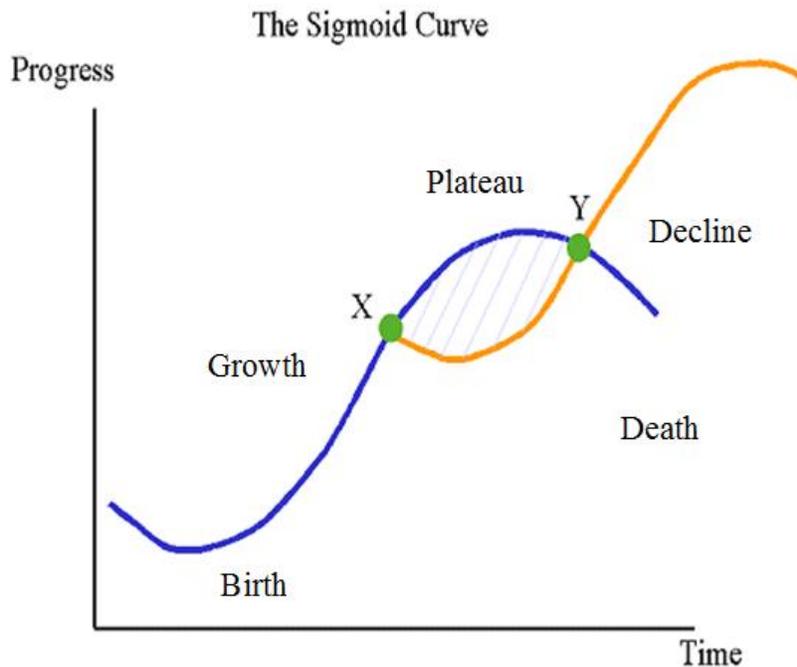


Figure 5 The Need of Reinventing a New Life Cycle

OPPORTUNITIES and STRATEGIES

The OCAC Five-Year Strategies addresses four key areas (Chan 2013), and is intended to help the church continue to grow:

- (1) A renewed vision: We need to be clear on our vision and which direction the church is taking before we can achieve the next level of numerical and spiritual growth. This vision will unite the various ministries of the church to go forward together (Granberg-Michaelson 2004, 92-93; Hybels 2002, 42).
- (2) A move to spiritual maturity: Greg Hawkins & Cally Parkinson in their book, *Move: What 1000 Churches Review About Spiritual Growth*, identify three “spiritual movements” that move people from “Exploring Christ” to “Growing in Christ,” to “Close to Christ,” and finally to “Christ-Centered” (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 22). These movements will move people along the spiritual continuum from spiritual infancy and possible state of stagnation to spiritual fullness and maturity. The authors suggest catalytic spiritual activities such as spiritual friendships, evangelism, serving those in need, and spiritual mentors to influence and help people in their spiritual growth (Hawkins and Parkinson 2011, 121). Our church needs to consider some of these ideas and nurture members to continue to grow through various pathways of discipleship to spiritual maturity.
- (3) Transition of leadership: There is a need to create awareness in the church that the Cantonese-speaking leaders have been serving for many years and will soon pass the baton of leadership to the next generation. Most of our next generation are children of the first generation immigrants and are in the English-speaking congregation, with only a few in the other two congregations. As they are growing up, they are also trying to find their role in a Chinese church. We have begun to realize that the time has come for the first generation to accept them as partners and not treat them as “children,” but provide them with opportunities of leadership training and development so that they will gradually take over the leadership of the church (Blackaby 2001, 8-9; Hybels 2002, 80-87; Clinton 1988, 87, 128, 130; Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006, 190-192).
- (4) Mobilization of the older Cantonese-speaking generation: While the older generation has largely retired from leadership positions, there is still a need to motivate and mobilize them to return to ministry in different capacities and set an example for the next generation. The act of serving God does not stop at mid-life or during the third quarter of life, but continues throughout one’s life. However this does not mean that those who choose to practise lifelong serving will hold onto a leadership position without releasing it appropriately to others, as such serving can be lived out in different ways and forms. There is a lot of unfinished work for the Cantonese-speaking churches to do, as we are living among many people who do not

know Christ. The older Cantonese-speaking Christians are indeed an under-utilized resource which can become a force for the Kingdom of God.

The details of the first three items have been addressed in the OCAC Five-Year Strategies (Chan 2013) and lie outside the scope of this book. My intention here is to focus on the fourth item which is about mobilizing the older Cantonese-speaking generation to not give up but instead to step up, and to venture out of their comfort zones to do God's work (Nelson 2008, 8).

HOW THE *TRIBE OF CALEB* PROJECT WAS STARTED

In September of 2012, while church leaders were in the process of developing the OCAC strategies, I was attending an Executive Committee meeting of the Canadian Chinese Alliance Churches Association (CCACA). The CCACA is a church association with over 90 member-churches in the C&MA. Its primary functions are to provide a fellowship forum for member-churches, leverage resources so that large churches can support smaller ones, facilitate to plant new churches, explore overseas missions opportunities, and encourage the theological training of Christian workers.

At that time, I was serving as the CCACA's Assistant Executive Director responsible for church planting. One of the pastors at the meeting brought to our attention the lack of participation and early retirement from church ministry of many older and spiritually matured Christians in Chinese churches. Conscious or unconscious reasons for them to withdraw may include feeling inadequate or unneeded, lacking confidence, fear or angst, thinking the task belongs to someone else, getting too old, etc. Church leadership needs to recognize this challenge and identify strategies to counter these weaknesses and inadequacies. He said that this situation would continue to worsen as the Cantonese-speaking congregation ages, and suggested that a pilot project be conducted to initiate a movement to motivate and mobilize these Christians to serve actively in the local church. After some discussions, the CCACA concluded that this kind of project would definitely be worthwhile to pursue, however, nobody at the meeting was aware of anything of this nature being done in the more than 80 Chinese Alliance Churches in Canada at the time. They raised the hope that if a church could spear-head such a movement, perhaps other churches would follow suit.

Realizing that such a project would benefit not only my own church but also the Chinese churches in general, I contemplated the possibility of taking on such an initiative in OCAC. After two months of prayer and consideration, I decided to pursue it by exploring the possibility of a pilot project called the *Tribe of Caleb*, named after the Biblical Caleb, using our church as a test environment. Through the process of consultation and vision sharing, our church leaders indicated that this was something that should have been done much earlier and were convinced that we should initiate this as a pilot project as soon as we could. As it turned out, this work was

also deemed to be a suitable topic for research by Tyndale Seminary and had subsequently become the thesis in my Doctor of Ministry program.

Note that the *Tribe of Caleb* is the title of the project, named after the Biblical Caleb mentioned in the Book of Joshua. Determined to continue to serve even at 85 years of age, Caleb had set an example of lifelong serving for senior Christians today. Given the fact that the twelve Tribes of Israel are listed out in the Old Testament (Gen. 49), the word “Tribe” here is not to mean a tribe of descendants of Caleb, but a group of people who have taken Caleb as their model and example. The people in the *Tribe of Caleb* project have no blood relationship to Caleb, very much like the descendants of Abraham who are the children of faith but are not related by blood to Abraham (Rom. 4:11-16).

The *Tribe of Caleb* project was initially conceptualized to be a pilot project conducted over a period of 7 months. There was no intention to create a new long-term ministry in the church as the church is already occupied with many activities and programs. It was intended to instill a spirit of urgency of serving in the followers of Christ and encourage them to take up active serving even when they are in their golden years. After the pilot project, the participants were expected to continue on their own with a renewed passion to serve in the capacities that would fit them the best in existing ministries of the church.

In the initial design, the pilot project would have monthly activities that would include week-day worship, workshops, practical training exercises in the form of outreach visitations, interest group meetings, and planning and reporting of activities. It was intended to equip and train Cantonese-speaking senior Christians, described here as “second-milers,” and to provide them with opportunities to serve in meaningful church ministries.

In this context, the term, “second-miler” is largely used to refer to retirees or those who are about to retire. These people have had a career in various areas of the work-force during their work-life (this is their first mile). Yet in the later part of their life, they have a desire for significantly more involvement in church ministry which is different from their previous secular work (this is their second mile).

Before going into the description of the *Tribe of Caleb* project in Chapter 4, I would like to establish in the next two chapters a Biblical foundation for doing this work, as well as explore from the social science perspective how society is reacting to the global phenomenon of aging and how the church should respond to the same challenge. This is intended to delineate the significance of such a project to be conducted in a church which has an aging population but wants to continue to grow and contribute to the Kingdom.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE

The purpose of the *Tribe of Caleb* project is to motivate and mobilize senior Christians to engage in active church ministries. But is this work Biblical? Does the Bible teach us to serve at old age? Are there examples in the Scripture that encourage senior Christians to serve lifelong?

This chapter addresses the theological rationale in terms of the Biblical theme and foundation of lifelong serving, together with many examples found in both the Old and New Testaments and throughout the church's two thousand years of history. The importance of finishing well is also discussed. The purpose is to motivate Christians in the third quarter of their life to serve.

LIFELONG SERVING ROOTED IN THE CALEB NARRATIVE

We now first look at Joshua 14: 6-15. The passage says:

Now the people of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly. So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.'

"Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said."

Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. (Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba after Arba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites.)

Then the land had rest from war. (Joshua 14:6-15)

This passage was about Caleb seeking permission to occupy the land of the Anakites. At this time, Joshua had succeeded Moses as leader and brought the next generation of Israelites into Canaan, but they still had not occupied all the land. Caleb, now at the age of 85, asked Joshua to give him permission to take possession of the land of the Anakites. After hearing Caleb's convictions and request, Joshua blessed Caleb and granted him permission to take over the land.

We recall that forty-five years earlier, Caleb was sent at the age of forty as one of the twelve Hebrew spies into the Promised Land. After the spies had explored the Land and returned, only he and Joshua kept faith in God and urged the Israelites to enter into Canaan (Num. 13). They argued that even though the people there were like giants, the Israelites should trust God in taking over the land. The other ten spies, however, caused the people to rebel against God's instructions. They were later punished together with the rest of the Israelites who were over the age of twenty with the exception of only Joshua and Caleb to spend forty years wandering in the desert without ever entering into the Promised Land (Num. 14:29-30).

Both Caleb and Joshua demonstrated wholehearted obedience and faithfulness to the Lord. Joshua, in his last address to the Israelites before his death, said: "But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15). Caleb also had been faithful to God all his life. Forty-five years previously, when God announced His punishment on the Israelites because of their disobedience and refusal to follow God's instruction to enter into the Promised Land, He singled out Caleb and commended him saying: "because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it" (Num. 14:24). Caleb was steadfast throughout these 45 years in following God and had set an excellent example of serving God during his entire life. From this passage, among other things, a clear Biblical theme of lifelong serving emerges, and this has served to underlie and guide the *Tribe of Caleb* project, aiming to motivate the Cantonese-speaking senior Christians to continue to serve the Lord even though they may be already advanced in age.

OTHER INSIGHTS

In addition to the main Biblical theme of lifelong serving, there are also a number of theological insights that surface in this Joshua passage.

The Role of Affirmation from Leadership

There was opportunity for Caleb to act independently in defeating the Anakites and take over their land. However he respected Joshua's leadership and did not embark on a personal mission without first seeking permission and affirmation from Joshua (Josh. 14:12). Giving permission and affirmation continues to be an important function of leadership today, and our church is no exception. Accordingly, our church leaders have validated and affirmed the

necessity of the *Tribe of Caleb* project, welcoming, encouraging and providing opportunities for our own “Calebs” to serve.

Partnering with the Younger Generation

Given the fact that none of the Israelites above the age of twenty had been allowed to enter the Promised Land, now – 45 years later – the oldest among them must have been under sixty five (except Caleb and Joshua). It is not difficult to see that Joshua was leading a generation younger than himself into the Promised Land. It is also obvious that Caleb must have partnered with that same younger generation to conquer the Anakites. Such partnership helps combine the wisdom of the aged with the energy and enthusiasm of the youth. In our church, there is obvious potential for partnership between the young and the old in serving God together. The *Tribe of Caleb* project provided such opportunities.

Continuing with the Unfinished Task

To the Israelites, conquering the land of the Anakites was part of the unfinished task. As a result of their earlier disobedience to the specific commands of the Lord, the Israelites had not driven out all Canaanites under Joshua’s leadership (Judg. 1: 21, 27-34). After Joshua’s death, an Angel of the Lord announced this message: “I will not drive them out before you; they will become traps for you, and their gods will become snares to you” (Judg. 2:3).

Upon reflection on the relatively large number of Cantonese-speaking people in Ottawa that are not part of any church, we too have our unfinished task. In addition, there are also numerous Cantonese-speaking people living in small towns outside Ottawa such as Renfrew, Arnprior, Smiths Falls, Cornwall, and Brockville. Many of them are owners of or workers in Chinese restaurants. For us as Cantonese-speaking Christians, this is part of our unfinished task in Ottawa.

THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION OF LIFELONG SERVING

The theme of lifelong serving means serving God throughout a person’s life, from the time he/she becomes a Christian to the end of his/her life regardless of age. After a person has come to know God and has accepted Jesus as his/her Lord and Saviour, he/she is justified before God. Justification is the legal act by which the sinner has been declared righteous by God on the basis of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ (Berkhof 1983, 138). Justification leads to sanctification, which calls for a life of consecration in the service of God. This is a lifelong process (Berkhof 1983, 143). I would like to begin the discussion of lifelong serving from the perspective of sanctification.

Sanctification

Sanctification is a gift from God and, at the same time, requires the effort and cooperation of the believer. As such, while it is the Holy Spirit who accomplishes sanctification, it is at the same time the responsibility of the believer to cooperate in obedience to the Word of God. In the words of Louis Berkhof,

Sanctification is the gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit by which He purifies the believer, renews his whole nature in the image of God, and enables him to perform good works. It consists of two parts: the gradual removal of the pollution and corruption of human nature (Rom. 6:6, Gal. 5:24), and the gradual development of the new life in consecration to God (Rom. 6:4, 5; Gal. 2:19; Col. 2:12; 3:1, 2). (Berkhof 1983, 143)

Living a sanctified life is a command in the Scripture (Gen. 17:1; Deut. 18:13; Ps. 119:1; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Eph. 5:25-27). It is also an explicit requirement as Jesus stated in John 17:19: “For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.” However, this does not mean that the follower of Christ is guaranteed never again to sin, but that further repentance will always lead to forgiveness of sins and purification from unrighteousness (1 John 1:9; 2:1-3).

The contexts from both the Old and New Testaments point to the requirement of living lives that are blameless. Sanctification is a process that extends throughout the whole life of the believer. In this process, he/she will strive to lead a life of good works, and will grow to be more like Christ. The nature of these good works is clarified by the Westminster Confession of Faith which states:

These good works, done in obedience to God’s commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto; that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end eternal life. (Williamson 1964, 117)

The Confession of Faith continues to answer the question of how a work may be truly good. Two requirements are to be satisfied:

(1) It must be in conformity with the revealed will of God. It must be that which God himself has commanded in his Holy Word. “And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us” (Deut. 6:25). (2) It must also spring from a “good conscience.” It must be that which is done with sincerity of heart as an act of service to God. As Hebrews 13:18 says: “For

we trust that we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.”
(Williamson 1964, 117)

According to Paul, equipping for good works is a significant reason why the Scripture was given to us: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). The servant of God must be thoroughly equipped by the Word of God to allow him/her to do good work.

The Two Components: Lifelong and Serving

In this Biblical theme of lifelong serving, two components are evident: the *Serving* component, and the *Lifelong* component. I will further explain these two components separately and then together in the following sections.

The Serving Component

Clearly, serving God results in doing good works. But the purpose of serving is not to gain God’s favour, as we are already saved not by works but by faith (Eph. 2:8-9). Rather, it is a response to God’s love and to what Christ has done for us. There are numerous teachings in the Scripture related to serving God. These include Deut. 6:13, 10:12, 10:20, 11:13, 13:4, Josh. 22:5; 1 Sam. 12:20, 12:24, 1 Chron. 28:9, Matt. 4:10; Luke 22:26-27; John 12:26; Rom. 7:6, 12 :1; 1 Cor. 15:58; Col. 3:17; Heb. 9:14, 12:28; 1 Pet. 4:10; Rev. 7:15. Because of the overwhelmingly large number of Scriptural references, I will give only two representative quotes from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament:

It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. (Deuteronomy 13:4)

And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. (1 Chronicles 28:9)

But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22: 26-27)

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

In these four references alone, it is clear that serving God involves reverence, obedience, persistence, wholehearted devotion, service with a willing mind and humble heart, and knowing that our labour in the Lord is not in vain.

The Bible connects serving God to serving others. Ephesians 6:7 says, “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people,” and Matthew 25:40 says, “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” Then Jesus set the example of serving others, as noted in Mark 10:45: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” We are further instructed in Galatians 5:13 concerning the importance of attitude in service: “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.” So serving one another in love and in the Name of Christ is synonymous with serving Christ.

The Lifelong Component

I have addressed the *servicing* component in the theme of lifelong serving and will now discuss the *lifelong* component. According to John Charles Ryle, sanctification in this life is intended to get us ready and is “absolutely necessary to train and prepare us for Heaven” (Ryle 2007, 22). Donald Bloesch states: “Purification is a life-long process, not completed till death” (Bloesch 2006, 49). He quotes the Westminster Shorter Catechism as saying: “The souls of believers are, at their death, made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory” (Bloesch 2006, 49; Westminster 1919, 684). David Freeman, Vice President of Canadian Ministries of the C&MA, in an article in the denominational magazine writes: “Being a disciple is a lifelong pursuit which impacts all of life, day by day” (Freeman 2011, 17). It is clear that sanctification is widely accepted as a lifelong process.

The teaching of the *lifelong* concept is evident in the Scripture. Proverbs 22:6 says: “Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” So we are to follow God throughout our lives. Ps. 92:14 reminds us that serving God and producing fruit is not limited by age: “They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green.” God expects our service until old age. Isaiah 46:4 provides a comforting reminder to those in old age: “Even to your old age and gray hairs, I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.” It is obvious that God will not cast the aging away. In the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 4:16 also says: “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.” People of older age can be assured that the likeness of God

knows no age limitations. Every age group possesses adequate potential for creativity and spiritual rejuvenation (Harris 1986, 112). Staying the course in serving God to the end of life by trusting and loving the Lord leads to a life that finishes well and brings satisfaction and fulfillment to the individual.

CONCEPT OF LIFELONG SERVING AND ITS BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

I have addressed the two components of lifelong serving separately. Let us now look at the combined overall concept of lifelong serving and its foundation in the Scripture. Lifelong serving appears to stand in contrast to retirement from serving. To many people, the idealized image of retirement is to do what you feel like doing when you want to do it. Being stress-free and enjoying leisure time are key elements because retirement is considered to be a just reward for a lifetime of hard work (Leong 2008). There is no shortage of suggestions on how to retire in the literature: financial planning, vacation planning, travelling, starting a new hobby, or even sitting on the porch, sleeping, and doing nothing (Lewis 2013; Taylor 2011; Yih 2015; Zelinski 2009; Zelinski 2013; Zelinski 2015).

In contrast, Bob Buford expresses a different viewpoint:

“Banish retirement from your thinking. There is absolutely nothing about retirement in the Bible.... As you approach your 70’s, you may need to change the pace of your work or the nature of your work.” (Buford 1997, 144-145)

One way of applying Buford’s comments in the Christian context is to affirm that while Christians may retire from their working career, retirement from serving should not be a choice for them. John Piper, writing before the May 2009 death of Ralph Winter, described Winter as the founder of the U. S. Center for World Missions who, in his early eighties, was still traveling, speaking, and writing for the cause of Christ in world missions (Piper 2009). Piper quoted from Winter’s article, “The Retirement Booby Trap”:

Where in the Bible do they see [retirement]? Did Moses retire? Did Paul retire? Peter? John? Do military officers retire in the middle of a war?

Most men don’t die of old age, they die of retirement. I read somewhere that half the men retiring in the state of New York die within two years. Save your life and you’ll lose it.

Just like other drugs, other psychological addictions, retirement is a virulent disease, not a blessing. . . . (Winter 1985, 25)

These are some serious warnings about wasting the third quarter of life if this golden opportunity is not wisely taken hold of and directed towards doing something productive and meaningful for the Kingdom of God.

The Bible's teaching is against idle living. According to Ps. 71, seniors should continue to witness for God to the younger generation: "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come" (Ps. 71:18). They can be productive: "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ... " (Ps. 92:14), and are also full of wisdom: "I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom" (Job 32:7). Elderly men and women have a responsibility to guide and teach the younger generation how to live by setting an example (Titus 2:1-5). These so-called "aged saints," having spent a lifetime walking closely with God, are able to relate and testify to the truths of God's Word working in their lives. The Apostle Paul said in his letter to the Ephesians that we have to redeem the time that has been given to us: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16) and this means that we must take hold of every opportunity we have to serve the Lord. Indeed, the third quarter of life, often marked by retirement from necessary employment, opens a doorway to focusing one's efforts towards serving God and humanity in new endeavours, enlarging one's horizons and fulfilling dreams not previously realized.

The reference closest to retirement mentioned in the Bible is found in Numbers: Men twenty-five years old or more shall come to take part in the work at the tent of meeting, but at the age of fifty, they must retire from their regular service and work no longer. They may assist their brothers in performing their duties at the tent of meeting, but they themselves must not do the work. This, then, is how you are to assign the responsibilities of the Levites. (Numbers 8:24-26)

This passage indicates that these Levites, though instructed to retire from their regular service, did not retire from serving the Lord. At the age of fifty, they exchanged their work related activities from serving laboriously to one of advising and assisting a younger generation. A life lesson drawn from their situation suggests that one should not ask whether one should retire or continue working, but rather "How can my life best give glory to God as I age?" For the Christian, retirement is not a time to dread, but rather, it should be a time of increased opportunity to embrace God's work as part of the Master's design for human life (Leong 2008; Whelchel 2013).

Biblical Examples of Lifelong Serving

Serving through one's whole lifetime does not necessarily suggest a long life. Consider, for example, how our Lord Jesus completed His earthly tasks by the age of 33, culminating in His sacrificial death on the cross. After His resurrection, He continued His work on earth for

forty days, and then after His ascension sent the Holy Spirit to us. Even today, He keeps on making intercession for us in Heaven (Rom. 8:34). In this section, we will refer to six Biblical examples who had maintained a life of service into their older years rather than retiring from it.

Abraham, in answer to God's call, began a journey of faith that would eventually take him to Canaan. At first, he sojourned at Haran, but after the death of his father, the Lord called him to Canaan (Acts 7:2-4). He lived a life of obedience by trusting God (Gen. 12:1-9). He was promised a son and he believed it even though he was nearly a hundred years old and his wife Sarah was beyond the age of fertility (Gen. 17:17-19; Heb. 11:11). Some years later, after receiving that son of promise, he passed the test of being willing to sacrifice his own son, Isaac, as a supreme act of obedience to God in the most difficult of circumstances for any father (Gen. 22). He had clung to God's promises over many years, embodied the virtues of long-suffering patience, trusted in God's ultimate faithfulness (Hays 2003, 10), and followed God throughout his whole life till death at the age of 175 (Gen. 25:7).

Moses, after spending his first 40 years as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, and the second 40 years as a runaway and shepherd for the flocks of Jethro/Reuel (Exod. 2:18; Acts 7:23-30), finally received a humanly impossible mission from God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (Exod. 3:10). He followed God faithfully and dedicated his life to serving the Lord for yet another 40 years to the very end of his life. During one incident when he was trying to obtain water for the Israelites in the wilderness, God instructed Moses to 'speak to the rock' - which would have allowed God to perform an extraordinary miracle of providing for the needs of the people. Moses, however, struck the rock twice with his staff, resulting in a flow of water for the people to drink. This was a serious loss of opportunity to glorify the Lord and an act of disobedience that resulted in Moses being unable to lead the people all the way into the Promised Land (Num. 20:11-12). In spite of this, Moses was allowed to see it from afar off and was satisfied. As Ruth Barton says, "For Moses the presence of God was the Promised Land. Next to that, everything else had already paled in significance" (Barton 2008, 214). This great leader of the Israelites died at the age of 120 (Deut. 34:7), confident that the work of his hand was established by the Lord (Ps. 90:17).

The priest Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were both "righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old" (Luke 1:6-7). One day, Zachariah was visited by the Angel Gabriel who promised him a son, John, who, a year later, was born to his wife Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-25). Afterwards, Zechariah uttered a prophecy, declaring God's promises to redeem Israel were now being brought to fulfillment (Luke 1:67-79). Both he and his wife became instruments of God's purpose and first interpreters of God's saving acts at an old age (Hays 2003, 6).

Simeon was a prophet living at an old age when Christ was born. He was promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah. He waited in faith and finally was able to hold the Baby Jesus in his hands on the occasion of His purification in the Temple. He faithfully trusted God, living a life of waiting for God's promise to be fulfilled. He, speaking under the guidance of the Spirit, foretold both Mary's suffering and the role of Jesus as a sign "for the falling and the rising of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34-35). He gave thanks to God, and declared the news "to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). Simeon is another lifelong serving example.

Finally, the Apostle John, the last survivor of the Twelve Apostles, was dwelling at Ephesus until about 100 A.D (Hurlbut 1970, 36). He was the author of one of the four Gospels, three New Testament epistles, and the book of Revelation. Following the description by William McBirnie (McBirnie 1973), while in Ephesus, by order of the Roman emperor Domitian, John was exiled to an island called Patmos. When he was released from exile, he returned to Ephesus and lived till the time of the Roman emperor Trajan. According to a church tradition, when John was evidently an old man in Ephesus, he had to be carried to the church in the arms of his disciples. At these meetings, he was accustomed to say no more than, "Little children, love one another!" After a time, the disciples wearied at always hearing the same words, asked, "Master, why do you always say this?" "It is the Lord's command," was his reply. "And if this alone be done, it is enough!" It is said that John founded and built churches throughout all Asia, and worn out by old age, he died at about ninety years of age in the beginning of the second century and was buried near Ephesus (McBirnie 1973; Lockyer 1972, 97).

Examples of Lifelong Serving in the History of the Christian Church

In the previous section, we have seen many Biblical examples of finishing well and lifelong contributors to the purposes of God. Let us now take a look at some lifelong serving examples in the history of the Christian church. There are many such examples, from the time of the church fathers, throughout the Middle Ages, to more contemporary times. I will cite examples in six different periods of church history (Hurlbut 1970, 14-15): The Early Church (70-313), the Imperial Church (313 - 476), the Medieval Church (476 – 1453), the Reformed Church (1453 – 1648), the Modern Church (1648 – 1970), and the contemporary period (1970 – the present). More than half of these lived beyond the age of 70, each demonstrating lifelong serving.

Polycarp (70-155), living in the period of Early Church, was the Bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor (Hurlbut 1970, 44). He is noted for his martyrdom. During his time, tensions had risen between the Christians and those who venerated Caesar. According to Piper (Piper 2009), one day, Polycarp was captured and was asked to worship Caesar and denounce Christ. He refused and gave his most famous response: "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he hath done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my king who saved me?" The proconsul replied,

“I have wild beasts; if thou repent not, I will throw thee to them.” To which Polycarp replied, “Send for them. For repentance from better to worse is not a change permitted to us; but to change from cruelty to righteousness is a noble thing.” He was burned on the pyre, having served God till his death (Kiefer 1999).

Augustine of Hippo (354-430), living in the period of Imperial Church, was one of the great leaders of this period in the West. During this time, Christianity was recognized as the official religion of the Roman Empire, and a Christian Emperor held supreme authority with a court of professed Christians around him (Hurlbut 1970, 58). In Augustine’s earlier days, he struggled in making the decision to become a Christian. In his prayer, he said:

When I thought of devoting myself entirely to you, my God... it was I that wished to do it, and I that wished not to do it. It was I. And since I neither completely wished, nor completely refused, I fought against myself and tore myself to pieces. (Gonzalez Volume 1 2007, 207)

But after he had made the decision to follow Christ, he abandoned his career as a professor and set on a course that would eventually result in his becoming one of the most influential figures in the entire history of Christianity. “Confessions” and “The City of God” together with his other writings on the theology of the source of evil, and theology of freedom of the will are some of his most influential writings (Gonzalez Volume 1 2007, 207-216). After conversion at age 31, Augustine devoted the remaining 45 years of his life to serving the Lord until his death at the age of 76 (Latourette 1997, 174).

Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), living in the period of Medieval Church, was the founder of the Franciscan Orders. Established in 1209, the Franciscans consisted of men and women who were leaders of the church reform movements of the early 13th century. From Italy, they spread rapidly over all of Europe and became the most numerous of all the orders. Francis’ fraternal charity, consecration to poverty, and dynamic leadership drew thousands of followers and made him one of the most respected religious figures of his time. Although he was in constant pain and almost totally blind two years before the end of his short life, he continued to serve God. He was one of the holiest, most devoted, and most lovable of men (Britannica 1991, 926; Hurlbut 1970, 106). Even though Francis only lived to the relatively young age of 45, he spent his life serving God till his death.

Martin Luther (1483-1546), living in the period of the Reformed Church, has been called “the founder of Protestant civilization” (Hurlbut 1970, 131). Son of a miner, aiming to be a lawyer, he was called to service and was ordained to the priesthood. He became disenchanted by the worldliness and wickedness in the church. In 1511, he began his ministry as a reformer by attacking the selling of “indulgences,” and nailed his famous Ninety-five Theses to the door of

the church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. One of the purposes of these theses was to attack the sale of indulgences used to raise money for what he considered unjustifiable purposes such as the building of St. Peter's Church (Gonzalez Volume 2 2007, 22). He was excommunicated by Pope Leo X, and his life was threatened. However, he persevered, becoming the author of many writings and was most known for the translation of the Bible into the German language. In spite of many difficulties, he maintained his course until he died at the age of 63 (Hurlbut 1970, 132).

John Wesley (1703-1791), living in the period of Modern Church, was born at Epworth, in the north of England (Hurlbut 1970, 145). During his days at Oxford, he became associated with a group of students who aimed for holy living. He soon became the leader of this group, which was mocked by others as a "holy club," and the founder of the Methodist Society, which eventually became very large. Wesley preached numerous times a day and travelled thousands of miles on horseback every year all over England and Ireland, preaching, organizing societies throughout his life, continuing until almost the end of the eighteenth century when he died at the age of 88 (Gonzalez Volume 2 2007, 209-216).

Phoebe Palmer (1807-1874), living in the period of the Modern Church, proved to be one of the most important Wesleyan-Holiness speakers of her time. Born in New York, she suffered a nearly fatal illness and then miraculously recovered, according to Douglas Sweeney (Sweeney 2005, 136-137). She and her sister Sarah began their famous Tuesday Meetings for the Promotion of Holiness, featuring Bible study, prayer, and inspiring spiritual testimonies, especially those that pertained to sanctification. The Tuesday Meetings event took off, attracting hundreds to their home, and in 1839, men were admitted to these Meetings. Mrs. Palmer's circle widened to include Methodist bishops, theologians, and ministers, as well as lay men and women. Phoebe continued to serve to the end of her life at the age of 67 (Sweeney 2005, 136-137).

Charlotte Diggs Moon (1840-1912), living in the period of the Modern Church, is another prominent woman who dedicated her life to God. According to Sweeney (2005, 94-95), she was the most consequential Southern Baptist female missionary of the 19th century. She left for China in 1872 and endured tumultuous times there including the anti-Western Boxers' Uprising during 1899-1900. She served until December of 1912 when her chronic illnesses and regular bouts of depression overtook her. She died on her way back home on board a ship while docked in the harbour of Kobe, Japan. Her efforts had inspired thousands to serve as overseas missionaries, and from 1890 to 1900, the number of American missionaries had grown from less than 1,000 to nearly 5,000. Charlotte Moon was an excellent example of someone who offers lifelong service to the Lord (Sweeney 2005, 94-95).

Robert Alexander Jaffray (1873-1945), living in the period of the Modern Church, was a man of great vision and faith, and a man who loved the lost, especially the Chinese. He was used

mightily by God and accomplished great deeds, even with poor health. He was a man of prayer and had a very close fellowship with God. He spent 35 years of his life in China (Tozer 1990, 23) and continued to serve the Lord in Indo-China for another 15 years until he died in a Japanese prison camp at the age of 72 (Tozer 1990, 134). A.W. Tozer remarks, "His entire life had been lived for others. He had spent his years searching for the poor of the earth, for the oppressed and enslaved, crying to their oppressors, 'Let my people go!'" (Tozer 1990, 133-134)

In the contemporary period from 1970 to the present, I will cite three people whose lives span this period. Jimmy Warren (1939-2006), father of the more well-known Rick Warren, author and founding pastor of the Saddleback Church in California, had been a minister for 50 years and building 150 church buildings around the world. One night near the end of Jimmy's life in 1999, he reached out and kept saying "Save one more for Jesus!" (Warren 2002, 287) He had not stopped serving until the end of his life.

Closer to home, we have Jonathan Kaan (born in 1926) who is currently serving as Advisor in our church in Ottawa. According to his son, Wilson (Kaan 2013, 15), Jonathan was raised as an orphan by an American missionary, Ruth Hitchcock, and two German missionaries. He grew up in China, graduated from seminary in Hong Kong, went to Vietnam to begin his church ministry, and eventually came to Canada as the founding pastor of a Chinese Alliance church in Montreal. Over the past 60 years, he travelled around the world and planted Alliance churches on four continents: Asia, North America, Australia and Europe. He is still active in serving the Lord at the age of almost 90 (Kaan 2013, 15).

Finally, we must not forget to mention Billy Graham (born in 1918), a man who continues to have significant influence through The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association which he founded in 1950 and directed for many years. A quotation from his son, William Franklin Graham, Jr., summarizes the life of Billy Graham well:

Billy Graham, the American Christian evangelist, is best known for his worldwide evangelistic crusades preaching the message of Christianity to more people than anyone in history. The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) reports, "nearly 215 million people in more than 185 countries" have been reached through his ministry. In his lifetime, he has led many thousands to make a decision to receive Jesus as personal Savior and to live for Christ. Graham has been an adviser to many American presidents and according to Gallup Polls is regularly listed as one of the "Ten Most Admired Men in the World." (Christianity 2013)

Billy Graham has authored more than 30 books, many of which were best sellers, and translated into other languages. Now aged over 96, he is still actively serving God.

The CCACA “Second-mile” Initiative

After listing this “great cloud of witnesses” as examples of lifelong serving and finishing well over the entire history of the church, I would like to highlight the recent developments of the CCACA in which I served from the beginning of 2008 to the end of 2013. Back in 2005 before my involvement, leaders of the CCACA saw the potential of many mature Christians who had been actively serving for many years in local churches. These people were seeking a greater experience and broader horizon in serving God, mostly in a capacity they had not had before. Busy with their secular careers in the past, they had little time to pursue these opportunities. Now approaching or having arrived at retirement, they had more time at hand, and would have liked to learn new skills and venture out to serve God. The leaders of the CCACA thought if they could provide these people with proper training and opportunities, they would have a chance to step up and achieve a higher level of ministry for God. The CCACA therefore initiated the “Second-Mile” initiative to encourage these “second-milers” to take up a certain amount of seminary training which would be the equivalent of five seminary credit courses. Afterwards, they could be recruited to serve in selected areas of ministry. As a result, over the past decade, scores of mature Christians have participated in this program and have become pastors and missionaries in Canada and abroad. Just to cite a few of them, we have examples in the Alberta’s Deer Park Alliance Church (Chinese Ministry) in Red Deer, the Edmonton Chinese Alliance Church, Toronto’s Midtown Alliance Church, the Newmarket Chinese Alliance Church, the Toronto Simpson Mandarin Alliance Church, and the Montego Bay Chinese Alliance Church.

As a case in point, I am one of these “second-milers.” Having completed my degrees in Bachelor of Applied Science, Masters of Engineering, and Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering, I had worked in private industry, taught in university, and served in the federal government for more than 30 years. In the mid-2000’s, when I was serving as Vice-President of the Communications Research Centre Canada, I was contemplating taking early retirement from my executive position in the Canadian Government. This was my “first mile” and it lasted for over 30 years. At this time, I was encouraged by the CCACA to explore the possibility of becoming a “second-miler” to serve God, even though I had no idea of where it could lead me to. Nevertheless, I started to equip myself by taking seminary courses and was called in 2007 to serve at the CCACA in the capacity of Assistant Executive Director responsible for church planting. I completed my Masters’ degree studies at Tyndale in 2009, and in addition to my work at CCACA, I was called in 2010 to serve as a pastor in my own church. I took the opportunity to continue my studies and completed my Doctor of Ministry program in 2015. This would not have been possible without such a program.

While the *Tribe of Caleb* project may have some similarities to the earlier CCACA “Second-Mile” initiative, its objective and methods are quite different. Rather than suitably training and developing individuals towards becoming pastors, our purpose is to mobilize senior lay Christians to actively serve God in a local church. Should our experience and learnings result

in transferrable principles applicable in other churches, more senior Christians would have the opportunities to practise lifelong serving within their local churches in a more systematic and effective manner.

FINISHING WELL BY STAYING THE COURSE

Lifelong serving means serving God throughout a person's life, from the time he/she becomes a follower of Christ to the end of his/her life regardless of age. This implies that such a person needs to finish well by staying the course in the often challenging environment of church life. One may ask, "How am I going to find the strength to keep going, given the weight of the pressures facing me at church?" (Hybels 2002, 231) Bill Hybels, in his book, *Courageous Leadership*, suggests that one of the most important things one must do to stay the course is to make one's calling sure and stay focused (Hybels 2002, 234). In 2 Timothy 4:5b, the Apostle Paul says: "discharge all the duties of your ministry," meaning by implication that we should fulfill the exact ministry that God has given us, hence knowing our calling and our ministry is of utmost importance.

Another helpful suggestion Hybels makes is "to endure with an eternal perspective" (Hybels 2002, 249). What he means is to look at the present hardships from a broader viewpoint and that will remind us of the goal that is always before us. To stress this point, Hybels paraphrases 1 Corinthians 15:58 in today's modern language: "No matter how difficult the hardship, no matter how long a particular storm lasts, no matter how dark and scary it gets, no matter how the winds howl and the waves crash... choose the path of courage. Be steadfast. Be immovable. Endure" (Hybels 2002, 251).

Indeed, according to the writer of Hebrews, endurance is what we should practise as we run the race before us: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1).

The Bible has numerous examples of those who finished well. In addition to Caleb and Joshua and the examples provided earlier in this chapter, these include Job, Joseph, Samuel, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel, John, Luke, Mary, Paul, and Peter. Unfortunately, there are also those who started well but did not finish well, such as King Saul, King Solomon, and Judas the Traitor.

Paul in his letter to Timothy says: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). Finishing well was a top priority for the Apostle, and it must be for us, too.

However, finishing well does not mean finishing unblemished or perfect. That is impossible according to 1 John 1:8, 10. But it is possible to stumble and by God's grace get up again to finish well as in the case of King David (2 Sam. 12:1-24; Ps. 51). Furthermore, it is a joy to finish the course in lifelong serving (Ps. 100; 1 Pet. 1:8-9; Phil. 4:4) and even to receive a prize as Philippians 3:14 says: "I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

I will close this section with a story. At the end of *Courageous Leadership*, Hybels told a touching story of his dying friend, Jon Rasmussen, whom he described as a close friend, a brother, a mentor, a sailing partner, a fellow soldier. Two days before his death, he gave Hybels a parting gift, saying: "Bill, your life gave my life direction. From the day we met, God used you to show me how my life could have purpose and meaning." The gift was a beautiful silver mariner's compass on the back of which were written the words "Stay the Course." Hybels concludes his book with this statement: "If I do – if all of us leaders do – we will win the day for the glory of the One whose name we bear." Staying the course until the end is his message (Hybels 2002, 251-253).

CLOSING REMARKS

In this chapter, I have attempted to outline the theological rationale that informs the theme of lifelong serving. It is supported by a strong theological foundation and many examples in the Bible as well as throughout the history of the Christian church over the past two thousand years. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the importance of staying the course and finishing well. The Biblical teachings and examples illustrated here are intended to motivate the senior Christians to continue to serve.

The thoughts presented in this chapter had not only established the theological rationale for the *Tribe of Caleb* project, but had also served as the basis and motivation that underlined the fundamental concept of this project and the general design of its major building blocks. These will be presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER THREE

LIFELONG SERVING FROM THE SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

In the previous chapter, I provided a theological rationale for the theme of lifelong serving and many such examples in the Bible and in the history of the Christian church over the past two thousand years. In this chapter, I will address the phenomena of aging and increase in life expectancy, how society reacts to the opportunities in the third quarter of life, a lifelong serving success story outside the church, and the implications of aging for the church and the related opportunities.

THE PHENOMENA OF AGING AND INCREASED LIFE EXPECTANCY

Aging is as old as humanity and a universal phenomenon. The aging of the world population is progressive and rapid. In 2012, the United Nations published a report on aging entitled, *Aging in the Twenty-First Century*, in a collaborative effort with other major international organizations. This report states that the number of people aged 60 or over is growing at a rate faster than the total population in almost all regions of the world. It highlights the size of this group of people in the period from 1950 to 2012 and makes projections thereafter towards 2050. Based on their data, a summary chart has been re-constructed and is shown in Figure 6 (UN Population Fund 2012, 19).

The numbers are staggering. In the past ten years alone, the number of people aged 60 or over has risen by 178 million. The number of people who turn 60 each year worldwide is nearly 58 million, equivalent to almost two people per second. In 2012, people aged 60 or over represented almost 11.5 % of the total global population of 7 billion. By 2050, the proportion is projected to double to 22 % (UN Population Fund 2012, 20).

According to a study by the US Administration on Aging, the population aged 65 and over in the US had increased by 21% from 35.5 million in 2002 to 43.1 million in 2012 and was projected to increase to 79.7 million in 2040 (US Administration 2013). In Canada, the phenomenon of aging was well reported subsequent to a national census conducted in 2011 (Campion-Smith 2012; Curry 2012; Traber 2012). The report entitled, *Canadian Population in 2011: Age and Sex*, published by Statistics Canada states that the number of seniors aged 65 or over increased 14.1% between 2006 and 2011 to nearly 5 million. This rate of growth was higher than that of children aged 14 or under (0.5%), and people aged from 15 to 64 (5.7%). Seniors also accounted for a record high of 14.8% of the population in Canada in 2011, up from 13.7% five years earlier (Statistics Canada 2011a, 3).

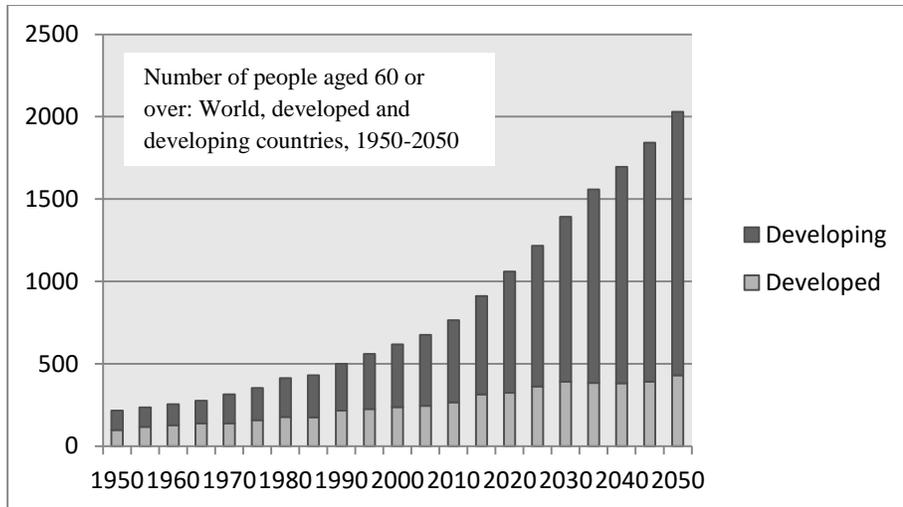


Figure 6: World-wide Number of People Aged 60 or Over From 1950-2050 (UN Population Fund 2012, 19)

A related phenomenon and part of the cause that can be observed is the increase in life expectancy. The same United Nations Report on aging provides the life expectancy at birth information for all countries and it can be projected to increase based on past data for both developed and developing countries (UN Population Fund ExSum 2012, 7). In 2012, Statistics Canada reported the life expectancy of both males and females from 1920 to 2009, showing an increase of life expectancy from 59 to 79 for men, and from 61 to 83 for women in this period of time (Statistics Canada 2011b).

Along these lines, Edward Vacek, in his paper, “Aging, Retirement, and Christianity,” makes some bold predictions. He says:

It has been postulated that someone, somewhere in the world, has already been born who will live to be 150. Scientists predict that over half the persons who are born today will live past the 100 year mark. Whatever the truth of these prognostications, it is already true that people are living longer and longer. In Jesus’s time, the average life lasted perhaps 35 to 40 years, and the same was true as recently as 1850. One hundred years later, that rose to 65 years; now in countries like Britain the average is 80 years. (Vacek 2012)

Now let us look at how society reacts to the phenomena of aging and increase in life expectancy.

REACTIONS TO AGING AND INCREASED LIFE EXPECTANCY

There are different reactions to aging. Some people think that seniors are weak, frail, behind the times, mentally inactive, and that they cannot do much. Others are of the opinion that there are tremendous opportunities for seniors. In fact, there are various types of people in this broad age group with substantial heterogeneity in the patterns of aging (Rowe & Kahn 1987, 143-149). What this means is that while many older people continue to show expected patterns of decline in health and functional ability, others appear more resilient to various physiological, emotional, or environmental challenges (DiPietro et al 2012). In their book, *Enabling the Elderly*, Sheldon Tobin et al categorize the seniors into four groups: (1) The well-elderly in the community; (2) the homebound; (3) the nursing home residents; and (4) the dying (Tobin, Ellor, and Anderson-Ray 1986, 61-140).

Seniors in the first group are very active in society. A Swedish physician, Alvar Svanborg, who conducted a study over a period of 20 years, discovered that most of the persons studied did not get physically “old” until after age 75, and some only in their 80s according to Hendrickson (Hendrickson 1986, 119). Even though the last three groups of seniors may have limited activities, many of them continue to contribute to society in different ways: providing advice and encouragement, serving as advisors and mentors, and praying for matters that they may not be able to physically attend to (Hunse 2011-2012; Houston & Parker 2011, 195). In fact not everyone experiences the aging process the same way. Tangelder, in his paper, “Getting Old,” quotes the American gerontologist Nancy Howel in saying: “Aging is not a simple slope which everyone slides down at the same speed. It is a flight of irregular stairs down which some journey more quickly than others” (Tangelder 2005).

OPPORTUNITIES OF THE THIRD QUARTER OF LIFE

Alan Pifer, President Emeritus of Carnegie Corporation and Chairman of its Aging Society Project, proposes a redefinition of the period between the ages of 50 and 75 as the “third quarter of life” (Hendrickson 1986, 119). The combined effects of growing numbers of seniors and increasing life expectancy have created tremendous opportunities for people in their third quarter of life. These people can do something meaningful and society can make use of this valuable resource. In earlier ages, people barely reached age forty or fifty (Vacek 2012), and now they can use this extra time of retirement to do a lot more than in years past (Schachter-Shalomi and Miller 1995, 34).

Jean Houston, the director of the Foundation for Mind Research in Pomona, New York, and author of *Life Force* (Houston 1980) says:

No longer needing to compete and to be acceptable, likeable, and all those other things considered respectable in society, people are finally uncaged in their elder years, free to

release energies and capacities that the culture restrained in them when they were younger. The energies that people release after age sixty-five are not really new at all, but exist in a state of latency within the mind-body system. When we don't have to devote a large percentage of our time in fulfilling social obligations and meeting other people's expectations, we can unleash these energies and harness them for self-awareness, spiritual development, and creativity. (Schachter-Shalomi and Miller 1995, 34)

In Canada, while the average retirement age in 2012 was 62.9 (Statistics Canada 2013a), many third quarter people in North America retire earlier – even in their fifties – from their primary job, and have a tremendous reservoir of energy, talent, and experience to continue to do something different. Because of increased life expectancy and better health situations, many seniors can stay active for many years after retirement. In this respect, Vacek asks some interesting questions:

Would it be appropriate for [an individual] to decide to use these post-retirement years as a 20-year vacation? [If not, then] what is the purpose of these years? If one no longer has a role in society, then society can no longer provide one's reason to live. (Vacek 2012)

Indeed, without a full-time job to occupy the time, retirees have started asking themselves the questions: “Why am I still here? To what purpose?” (Schachter-Shalomi and Miller 1995, 32) There is often a conscious search for meaning – the provisional meanings of the many events of daily living as well as the ultimate meanings of life in general (Moberg 2001, 162; Seeber 1991, 143-152).

As a result, many have taken the direction to start a new career, become entrepreneurs, or study for advanced degrees. They take on new life patterns, strike out in new directions, and continue to explore new pathways for many more years. The opportunities are numerous. These include a wide range of working and learning opportunities, such as part-time employment, full- and part-time volunteer jobs, and periodic involvement in educational or retraining programs (Hendrickson 1986, 119-120). Buford (Buford 1997, 139) quotes Lydia Bronte in her book, *The Longevity Factor*, saying:

If you have had reasonably good health habits, by the time you celebrate your 60th birthday, instead of being on the downward slope of old age you may have two or three decades of productive adult time ahead of you....If you are not aware of this trend, you may make decisions that essentially foreshorten your own opportunities. (Bronte 1996)

Volunteering and Learning

A lot of people in their third quarter of life engage themselves in volunteer jobs rather than paid ones (Hendrickson 1986, 122). According to the Senate Report on Aging (Senate Report 2009, 131), 12 million Canadians contribute almost 2 billion hours as volunteers each year, and 11 % of these people, mostly seniors, contribute 77% of the volunteer hours. This is welcome news in society as volunteer work allows society to benefit from tapping into the skills and knowledge of older Canadians (Senate Report 2009, 131).

According to a recent study conducted by researchers at RTI International, one of the world's leading research institutes in the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina, America's 77 million baby boomers have the highest volunteer participation rate of any demographic group. The study found that nearly one-third of all baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964 served as volunteers in a variety of capacities. The boomers also volunteered more hours than any other age group, except for senior citizens. Donna Rabiner, who directed the study for RTI, says,

However, the results of this study indicate that this large, highly educated and wealthy generation is very active in their communities. If the baby boomers follow the same volunteering patterns as their parents, as they retire, we can expect their commitment to volunteer work to continue to rise. (RTI International 2005)

There are many examples to show that this is happening everywhere (Tyndale 2011; Kennedy 2007; Gardner 1998). A few years ago, a Christianity Today article written by John Kennedy used these words: “the new face of a growing missionary force has a few wrinkles” (Kennedy 2007). Many baby boomers are taking early retirement to volunteer in the missions field. Some are signing up for a few weeks, others for several years. Kennedy says “Wycliffe Associates has enjoyed a 40 percent increase several years in a row in boomer missionaries. The trend prompted Wycliffe in late 2005 to start building a volunteer mobilization center in Orlando” (Kennedy 2007).

The Senate Report on Aging went on to state that many seniors continue to learn new skills and knowledge after retirement. Some who have been unable to access learning opportunities during their working lives take advantage of retirement to learn a new skill (Senate Report 2009, 80). George Leonard, author of *Mastery*, was referenced by Schachter-Shalomi and Miller as saying that “elderhood gives seniors the chance not only to perfect the skills they have acquired over a lifetime, but to learn new ones” (Schachter-Shalomi and Miller 1995, 36). A less obvious advantage of learning new knowledge and skills is to keep the mind alert and develop the ability to counter senility. According to Buford,

Senility (not to be confused with Alzheimer's disease) is, I am told, no longer felt to be an inevitable condition of aging. Most gerontologists subscribe to the “use it or lose it”

theory when it comes to mental alertness. I have seen too many men and women let their minds grow fallow as they approach their sixties. (Buford 1994, 146)

There is some amazing and encouraging news according to the United Nations Population Fund study. It says that “Universities of the Third Age” have been established in many countries to educate those in the “third age” of life. They have been adopted in China as an important strategy for fostering education of older people, and surprisingly more than three million older students have enrolled in these Chinese “universities” set up by government, enterprises, armies, colleges and research institutions (UN Population Fund 2012, 58). Another interesting point made by the Senate Report is that: “Lifelong learning is linked to both longevity and quality of life” (Senate Report 2009, 81), an encouragement not only for the seniors but for the younger generation as well.

A Lifelong Serving Success Story

We have seen many lifelong serving examples in the previous chapter. At this point, it may be useful to highlight a current everyday example of a lifelong serving success story outside the church, that began during the second quarter of life and still continues thirty years later, through a remarkable life. The person in the story is Chandrasekhar Sankurathri (a.k.a. Chandra). Chandra was a student from India who later became a biologist with Health Canada and settled in Ottawa. One summer, his wife and their two children, ages six and four, left Canada for a vacation on Air India's Flight 182 to London. According to the Final Report of the Commission of Inquiry, it was June 23, 1985, as they flew over the coast of Ireland, a bomb exploded, killing all 329 people on board, including Chandra's wife and two children. Their bodies were never found (Commission of Inquiry 2010).

Chandra was left wondering what the point of his life was. He said in an interview years later: "I needed a purpose for my life. I wanted to do something useful with my life, so that's why I quit my job in Canada." His search for meaning led him to another continent and to a completely different life (Chandra 2004; CBC News 2010).

Chandra went to India and later established the Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation to help the poor. Its goal is "to promote rural community development in India, through education and vocational training, health care and emergency relief" (Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation 2013). An excerpt from an article in CNN summarizes the story well:

“India has so many problems,” says Sankurathri, 64. Two in particular caught his attention: a lack of school attendance and rampant blindness. With the money he had, Sankurathri created a foundation in his wife’s name, and in turn, built a school and an eye hospital in the small rural village of Kuruthu, not far from his wife’s birthplace. Today,

his foundation's efforts to empower the poor through education and health care are having significant success. Since its inception in 1992, Sarada School, named after the 4-year old daughter he lost, has grown from one to nine grades and graduated more than 1,200 children. It boasts of a zero drop-out rate as against the national average of 50%. The fees, books, uniforms, meals, even medical checkups are all provided free of cost by Dr. Chandra. All the students need to contribute is discipline and a keenness to learn. (Chandrasekhar 2008)

As a result of the tragedy, Chandra made a decision to change his life. The new course he has taken required him to make major changes, and to learn new knowledge and skills. Since that day, he has dedicated the rest of his life to help the poor in India till today. This is a success lifelong serving story that is happening outside the church.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCH

Having discussed how society is reacting to aging and increased life expectancy, let us now explore what implications aging has for the church. As society ages, so does the church population, and its leaders must constantly prepare themselves to face the challenge and grasp the opportunity it offers. In Canada, the average age of the church population is higher than that of the Canadian population. According to a Statistics Canada analysis conducted in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2001), the median age of individuals who identified themselves as Protestant was 42 years, well above the median of 37 for the Canadian population as a whole. Those who identified themselves as Anglican had a median age of 44, as did United Church members. Lutherans had a median age of 43, while Presbyterians were the oldest, with a median age of 46. This has not improved over time. Sam Reimer in his article, "A Demographic Look at Evangelical Congregations," reported that according to Reginald Bibby's 2005 data, Evangelicals have an average age of 44.7, and mainline Protestants 52.1 (Reimer 2010, 9). In comparison, the median age of all Canadians was only 40.2 in 2014 (Statistics Canada 2014).

Looking at the broader North American picture, the situation in the US is similar. According to the *Facts of Growth: 2010 Report*, 42 percent of the church is of age 50 or above, as compared to only 31% in the general population (Hadaway 2011, 5). This shows that throughout North America the church congregation is in general older than the general public. James Houston and Michael Parker, in their book, *Vision for the Aging Church*, observes that in their middle-sized community in Alabama, two of three churches in one major denomination alone are in danger of closing because their congregations consist almost exclusively of older members (Houston and Parker 2011, 47). This phenomenon is becoming more common in North America.

In January of 2013, a Canadian Council of Churches' Church Leaders meeting was held with representatives from the Catholic, United, Presbyterian, Anglican, Lutheran, Orthodox,

Baptist, and Mennonites churches, the Salvation Army, and the Reformed Church of Canada, with the Pentecostal Assembly and the C&MA sitting as observers. Their discussions led to the conclusion that the three major issues that all churches are facing are: declining numbers, an aging membership, and dwindling finances (Patterson 2013).

For the C&MA, Brem Frentz, its Vice President of Global Missions, reported in a recent interview that out of the 210 international workers in the denomination, 105 (exactly 50%) are over the age of 50, and within 10 years it is expected to increase to 161 (or 77%) (Frentz 2013). If younger workers do not replace those who will retire during this period of time, the C&MA will have a rather large complement of overseas workforce in their senior years.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHURCH

As mentioned earlier, an aging population offers a lot of opportunities to society and to the Christian church. From my readings on how a church can minister to seniors, I discovered that many programs have been created to target this age group (Moberg 2001; Hendrickson 1986; Tobin, Ellor, and Anderson-Ray 1986; Houston and Parker 2011). From the numerous examples that I have encountered, I will name just the following: the Innovative Ministries with Senior Adult in the United Church (United Church 2011); Friendship and Fun and Fitness programs in the Baptist Church (White Rock Baptist 2014); Luncheon, fellowship, exercise, and expedition programs in the Innisfil Community Church (Innisfil Community Church 2014); and the arts and crafts, socializing, and weekly luncheon programs of the Orthodox Church (Garklavs 1983). In addition, there is the “Special Topic Consultation in Creating a Senior Ministry for Churches” proposed by Church Growth Inc. (Church Growth Inc. 2015). It is obvious that a lot of programs have been created to serve seniors, however there is much less discussion on how churches can engage this group of seniors in meaningful Christian ministries. The Finishers Project Canada is one of the para-church organizations that encourage mid-life adults to become engaged in missions – either on a short-term basis or as a second-half career (Kennedy 2007; Finishers Canada 2015). The Global Opportunities is another organization that gives suggestions to retirees for participating in missions (Global Opportunities 1997). It is rather unfortunate that many churches are missing out on both a huge potential volunteer force within their walls and also a large mission field outside their walls by ignoring the potential of senior Christians (Butcher 1997). These older people have years of experience in living out their faith and a unique capacity to represent the love of Christ to others (Houston and Parker 2011, 30). The church needs to encourage them to be actively involved in ministry into their older years as there is increasing demand from the growing population for support and care. It will be a great loss if the church fails to provide such opportunities for service.

Some years ago, the Roman Catholics Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry discussed the issue of encouraging retired priests to continue to serve in the US. They suggested that these priests should not be given “busy work” or used to perform work other priests find

unattractive. Their study report states that the priest's "desire to perform a certain ministry should be equally weighed with his ability to perform and the opportunity or availability of the ministry" (US Catholic Conference 1979, 22).

Two things are important in this engagement. The first is the notion of "call." The priest should not continue ministry just because it makes him feel needed or offers a sense of direction after retirement. Certainly, the "call" of the priest by the Church community has a profound spiritual value for him (US Catholic Conference 1979, 22). The retired priest must also be committed to a pattern of growth and development which unfolded throughout his ministry and reached its fullness in old age (US Catholic Conference 1979, 23).

These principles that they have laid out have application to the senior laity as well. Senior learners can be committed to lifelong learning and continual spiritual growth. They can inspire others when they live as exemplars of the growing stewardship entrusted to them by God (Houston and Parker 2011, 68). One can certainly learn more skills and gain more wisdom as one gets older. Wisdom literature especially emphasizes this fact. For example, Job 12:12 says: "Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?" and Ps. 92:14 encourages the seniors that "They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green." Along with the rest of society, seniors must put aside misconceptions that people grow too old to learn. Instead, they need to dedicate themselves to personal discipline through which they may acquire the wisdom of the ages to serve God in a more effective way. Such is the key to becoming a lifelong learner (Harris 1986, 114).

Being old is not the same as acting old. According to Buford (Buford 1997, 140), Betty Friedan in her landmark book, *the Fountain of Age*, gives a fascinating account of her research in the aging process:

The mind plays an important role in how we age. The way we view ourselves – and the way we allow others to view us – she suggests, determines whether we are growing older or 'vitality age'.... The existing and almost universally held paradigm for aging is a period of decline and decay. (Friedan 1993)

So it is necessary to reconfigure our concept of age. To do that, we basically need to correct the idea that young is good, old is bad. To the adage, "you are only as old as you feel," Buford adds: "You are only as old as you think" (Buford 1997, 144-145).

As one reaches "retirement age," many things change, but living one's life to serve the Lord does not. Ps. 71:18 says: "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come." Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17 also say: "In the last days, God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your

sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.” As we age, we must focus on teaching about Jesus to those who walk behind us so that they may be led more by Jesus, lead more like Jesus, and lead more to Jesus (Pue 2005, 260).

Vacek makes some important observations with significance for seniors seeking a Christian attitude towards retirement. He considers the most basic Christian virtue as “our love for God, neighbour, self and world” (Vacek 1994). He suggests that it is not only out of gratitude but also out of love that we should care for the world’s future. He quotes the noted ethicist Daniel Callahan as saying, “The primary aspiration of the old... is to serve the young and the future” (Callahan 1988, 43).

Describing the last phase of a person’s life as “Afterglow or Celebration,” in his book, *the Making of a Leader*, Robert Clinton explains that these leaders have built up a lifetime of contacts and continue to exert influence in these relationships. Their storehouse of wisdom gathered over a lifetime of leadership will continue to bless and benefit many (Clinton 1988, 47). They will set a good example of lifelong serving for the next generation of leaders (Clinton 1988, 199).

Most of us grew up with the idea that first, we go to school, then, we work and finally, we retire. On the contrary, the Scriptures have little to say about retirement. Education, work, and leisure are all lifelong concepts grounded in the Scriptures. To age successfully, we must counter the many myths of aging, as old age does not always mean we are sick and frail. The old can continue to learn and to contribute in meaningful, eternal ways to God’s Kingdom (Houston and Parker 2011, 224). The Apostle Paul says, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16).

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have outlined the global phenomena of aging. This, coupled with increased life expectancy, has created tremendous opportunities for seniors, society and the church. People in the third quarter of life are healthier and more active than in years past. In society at large, many seniors are prepared to continue to do meaningful part-time or full-time work, with or without pay, and to engage in new learning, to fulfill earlier dreams, or to pursue new interests. The aging reality impacts the church, and the church must discover creative ways to respond to it. Unfortunately most churches are satisfied merely to minister to the needs of this age group, without paying attention to engaging them in meaningful ministry.

Our church is facing this very challenge and has therefore conducted the *Tribe of Caleb* project to challenge seniors to lifelong serving in areas that they may not have had opportunities to engage themselves in before. Based on the findings in this chapter, the activities for this project were designed to encourage, motivate, train, and provide opportunities to these senior

Christians so that they could actively engage their “second mile” in meaningful church ministries. I believe that these people have huge potential and can play a significant role in advancing God’s Kingdom.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN AND DESCRIPTION

The theological rationale and the social science perspective of the project were outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. In this chapter, I will provide a description of the *Tribe of Caleb* project in terms of its design, methods of data gathering, and details of the project.

The *Tribe of Caleb* project was conducted according to the key values of our church and denomination, reflecting our DNA: “Deeper Christian Life and Missions” (Pardington 1925; Reynolds 1992, 9, 16, 55-56). These two key values stem from the roots of the Alliance movement back in the 19th century. Today, the C&MA continues to focus on these two values which are the driving force of the ministries of our church.

The project was also inspired by the story of Caleb in Joshua 14:6-15 as described in Chapter 2. Its activities were designed, on one hand, to motivate the participants to have deeper devotion to the Lord, and, on the other, provide them with training in specific areas and opportunities to serve in church ministries.

As mentioned earlier, the main purpose of the *Tribe of Caleb* project was to motivate and mobilize the “second-mile” Cantonese-speaking Christians to engage in local church ministries. Three groups of people were the focus of this project: new believers who were not exposed to church ministries, long-time Christians who would like to expand their serving horizons and take up new challenges, and the mature Christians who were withdrawing or about to withdraw from active church ministries. The secondary purposes of the project were to help the church initiate some outreach programs to the regions surrounding Ottawa, help members develop a habit of serving God in their daily routines of life, and to impact the younger generation with examples of lifelong serving as demonstrated by the senior Christians.

SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

In order to address one of the major challenges that OCAC is facing, the *Tribe of Caleb* project was incorporated into OCAC’s Five-Year Strategies (Chan 2013). The project involved 40 Cantonese-speaking senior Christians over a period of 7 months. It was conducted only in the Cantonese-speaking congregation, since the majority of “second-mile” Christians were in this congregation, and we did not want to complicate the pilot project unnecessarily with more than one language.

Table 1 outlines the phases, activities, and progress of the project.

Table 1: Phases and Timetable of the Project

Project Phase	Description of Activity	Time-frame
Initialization Phase: Context Research and Needs Assessment	Identify the main challenge: need a renewed vision, leadership transition, motivation of the older Cantonese-speaking generation	May 2012 – Jul 2012
Implementation Phase	Share vision in two 2 sessions with leaders and participants	Nov 2012 – Dec 2012
	Implement the pilot project	Jan 2013 – Jul 2013
Post Implementation Phase	Obtain responses from participants and make observations	Jun 2013 – Sep 2013
	Conduct analysis and evaluation	Sep 2013 – Jul 2014
	Continue activities beyond project life-time in various forms	Aug 2013 – Feb 2015

THE DESIGN OF THE PROJECT

Action Research was the methodology used in this project. According to Ernest Stringer, “Action Research is a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives” (Stringer 2007, 1). He continues: “It is a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems” (Stringer 2007, 8). Another definition of Action Research provided by Paul Bramer and Mark Chapman states that “it is an iterative process of action, research and reflection guided by a leader with the participation of others in the situation in line with the highest ideals of the group to effect positive social and individual changes and to develop transferable models and theoretical knowledge” (Bramer and Chapman 2012). So change is an important factor in the Action Research approach.

The *Tribe of Caleb* project was about bringing change to a group of people with the purpose of mobilizing them to serve more actively in the church. There were action, research, and reflection. The action for the members was in the form of their participation in training and engaging in new ministries. There was research in exploring how participants behaved and responded to new initiatives that were deployed to bring positive changes in them. There was ongoing reflection that took place every month in the form of review meetings. Inputs received were used to steer the project forward by making ongoing adjustments.

METHODS OF DATA GATHERING

The project utilized three research instruments to collect both quantitative and qualitative data: a series of ongoing progress reviews, a project-end survey, and three sharing sessions. The ongoing progress reviews were conducted every month. Participants reported, on a voluntary basis, on the activities they had undertaken during the previous month. This was conducted in accordance with Stringer's "look, think, act" approach (Stringer 2007, 8) as previously referenced. The information provided in the reviews included: the nature of activities the participants had engaged in; new experiences they had encountered; and new lessons they had learned. The information was used to assess the progress of the project, what the participants had learned, what new ground had been covered, and to make ongoing adjustments to improve the project.

The survey, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, was conducted at the conclusion of the project. It was used to identify the new training that the participants had obtained, the kind of new ministries they had engaged in, and how they had benefited from the project. A copy of the survey form may be found in the Appendix.

The last instrument, consisting of three open sessions, was used at the conclusion of the project with the purpose of providing opportunities for the participants to share their experiences. This is what Stringer has referred to as "collaborative inquiry" and he says that "the most successful and productive action research occurs where individual participants have the opportunity to talk extensively about their experiences and perceptions" (Stringer 2007, 87). In these sharing sessions, participants were asked to elaborate on the three opinion questions that they had responded to in the survey:

1. What is the one new and useful skill that you have learned in the project?
2. What is the most valuable experience that you have encountered?
3. How might this experience contribute to your future church ministry involvement?

Participants were encouraged to voluntarily share openly in the sessions so that we could all learn from their experiences. But if some of them felt uncomfortable to share, I would obtain their responses on an individual basis. After the data were collected, Stringer's approach was used to identify key concepts, distill, analyze and interpret the data, and finally draw conclusions (Stringer 2007, 102-103).

PROJECT INITIATION

Having described the action research methodology and the methods for obtaining data, I will now address how the project took shape in our local church setting. As mentioned in Chapter 1 in which a description of the background was provided, this initiative was new to our church. I began with a meeting of some key leaders to first gauge their interest and level of

support. Subject to a favourable outcome, I planned to invite the congregation to attend a session of vision sharing shortly afterwards. The first meeting of leaders took place in November 2012 with 18 in attendance. In my usual leadership style, I drew up a plan outlining the objectives, organization of the project, and expected outcomes. Without much surprise, the concept was well received, and the leaders around the table expressed great interest. Some of them said this type of work should have been done long ago. Others even provided suggestions for the project. I took this as a strong encouragement from the leaders to proceed. I then called a second meeting in the following month inviting anyone from the congregation who would have an interest to come. Nineteen people came including some of the leaders who were at the first meeting. I shared the same vision with them and they were all enthusiastic about the project and made commitments to participate in it. I subsequently shared the concept with the Cantonese-speaking Ministry Team and the Board of Elders. Since both leadership teams were supportive, we decided to proceed. The project was given the name *Tribe of Caleb* after the Biblical Caleb who did not cease to serve God even at an advanced age.

The project began in January 2013, and invitation was extended to everyone in the congregation. From the beginning, the project had been strictly complying with the three key principles of ethics guidelines established by Tyndale University College and Seminary based on the Tri-Council Policy Statement: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice (Panel on Research Ethics 2014, 8). The potential participants understood that their participation was completely voluntary and there was no discrimination based on culture, race, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, linguistic proficiency, gender, or age. They were also aware that the project would be conducted in Cantonese.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The activities of this project were designed according to the two core values of the C&MA: Deeper Christian Life and Missions, and our emphases of discipleship and evangelism which stem from these two core values. We were mindful both to nurture the hearts and develop the skills of the participants (Ps. 78:72), and at the same time give attention to their needs and specific reasons of withdrawal from active ministry. Having known the participants for so many years, I could clearly sense that their withdrawal was largely due to lack of confidence, inadequate training, and unavailability of opportunities to serve. It was therefore evident that the activities of the project should, on one hand, motivate the participants to have a deeper devotion to the Lord, and, on the other, provide adequate training in specific areas and motivate them to serve in related ministry opportunities.

As such, plans were formulated for providing monthly Friday afternoon worship services (a simplified version of our Sunday Worship Service) and workshops on how to lead worship services, share the gospel, lead Bible studies, and preach. Coordinators quickly emerged to take

up responsibilities in organizing these activities. To undertake events of missions and evangelism, sub-committees were set up to plan and organize interest groups and outreach visitations to coffee shops, shopping centres, and small towns around Ottawa.

The project was overseen by an overall planning committee, meeting once a month and consisting of the coordinators and sub-committee chairs, with myself as chair. Participants were invited to attend workshops that provided learning opportunities, and practical training activities through outreach visitations, interest group meetings, preaching, leading worship services and Bible studies. There was no expectation that any member would attend all the activities and they were given the freedom to choose what they liked to participate in. These activities could be divided into training workshops and practical training exercises and are described in the following sections.

Training Workshops

There were four training workshops:

1. **Worship service leading:** This workshop was used to train members to chair a worship service, to read Scripture with appropriate dignity and clarity, to lead singing, and to assign worship service duties. The tasks seemed trivial at first sight but were needed by the new believers who had not been exposed to this type of ministry.
2. **Preaching:** This workshop was conducted immediately following a Friday worship service in which a lay preacher would have already preached a sermon. Since most of the members were not experienced in preaching, I, and another pastor, took up leadership of the workshop. We encouraged the participants to provide constructive comments to the lay preacher regarding the content of the sermon and his/her preaching style. These inputs turned out to be very useful for the preacher who had become the focus of the preaching workshop for that particular day. At the same time, they helped orient other participants who would preach in future worship services to sermon preparation and delivery.
3. **Bible study leading:** This workshop, consisting of five sessions, was conducted at mutually agreed dates and times. In the first few sessions, members were taught the basic techniques of how to lead a Bible study, and towards the end, they took turns to lead Bible studies. In addition to learning the skills to lead, the members were able to study the Word of God for their own benefit.
4. **Gospel outreach:** This workshop was conducted after each monthly Friday worship service and progress review session. A pastor, experienced in personal evangelism, was invited to conduct this workshop and teach various skills and techniques. Later on, members had many opportunities to actually use the skills in a real-life environment.

Practical Training Exercises

While the training workshops provided head knowledge to the participants through various sessions of instructions, four types of practical training exercises were designed to provide opportunities to the members to practise what they had learned in a real life environment:

1. **Worship and preaching:** The worship service was a monthly event that took place on a Friday afternoon during the months from January to June 2013. The service had the typical format of praying, singing, Scripture reading, preaching, and announcements. Lay people were invited to preach and this was a new experience for the participants. Some members who had never preached before spent long hours preparing and rehearsing before coming to the service and found the experience extremely rewarding.
2. **Coffee outreach:** The coffee outreach was organized into groups of 2 to 5 members each. During the 7-month period, 17 groups of people went separately to different McDonald's restaurants and to shopping malls to meet Cantonese-speaking people whom they had not met before. They initiated casual conversations with them, introducing our church to them. If an opportunity came up, they would guide the conversation into topics of gospel and faith. These "cold call" encounters were sometimes quite challenging and even intimidating, but the members persisted and became more at ease after some practice. The visitation teams soon discovered that many of these Cantonese-speaking people went consistently to the same locations on fixed days of the week and at fixed times of the day for coffee, and could hence plan their visits accordingly. They were also able to obtain permission through existing contacts to make visits to a senior residence in which a high concentration of Cantonese-speaking seniors lived.
3. **Small town outreach:** The small town outreach was organized into groups of 2 to 6 members each, similar to the coffee outreach arrangement. During the 7-month period, 13 groups of people visited separately the towns of Smiths Falls, Carleton Place, Perth, Rockland, Orleans, and Brockville, all within an hour's drive from Ottawa. They conducted Bible studies with the new believers, visited Chinese restaurants, a high school, and attended an international event organized by the government and local community leaders, bringing with them literature which included Christian newspapers, church resource literature and tracts. The groups were enthusiastic to participate in this type of outreach as it had a missions flavour, while the nature of the ministry was similar to that of the coffee outreach.
4. **Interest groups:** There were two interest groups. The first focused on cooking, and flower arrangements, while the second chose photo-editing, and photography as their topics of

interest. The groups met on selected days from February to the end of July 2013 with the purpose of attracting visitors who had not previously been exposed to the Christian faith to come. Through learning and sharing of various topics of interest, the members got to know these visitors and introduced them to our church. During the interest group meetings, a member who had participated in the preaching workshops would share a short message related to the gospel.

Project Operating Models

The *Tribe of Caleb* project activities were conducted according to three Operating Models. Depending on the activities that the members chose to participate in, they might be involved in any one or all of these models.

1. **Operating Model 1:** These activities took place during a Friday afternoon. The worship service started on time at 1:30 pm and finished before 2:30 pm. Members then had the choice of attending either the worship service workshop or the preaching workshop. After about 25 minutes, they came back for a 30-minute review and reflection session over the activities that had taken place during the previous month. This was a significant part of Operating Model 1, designed to provide opportunities for the participants to talk extensively about their experiences and perceptions (Stringer 2007, 87), so that they could engage themselves in a “look, think, act” approach throughout the project (Stringer 2007, 8), hence shaping the project and affirming the actions taken. After the review session, they joined the gospel outreach workshop which ended before 4 pm. Figure 7 describes the flow of these activities.

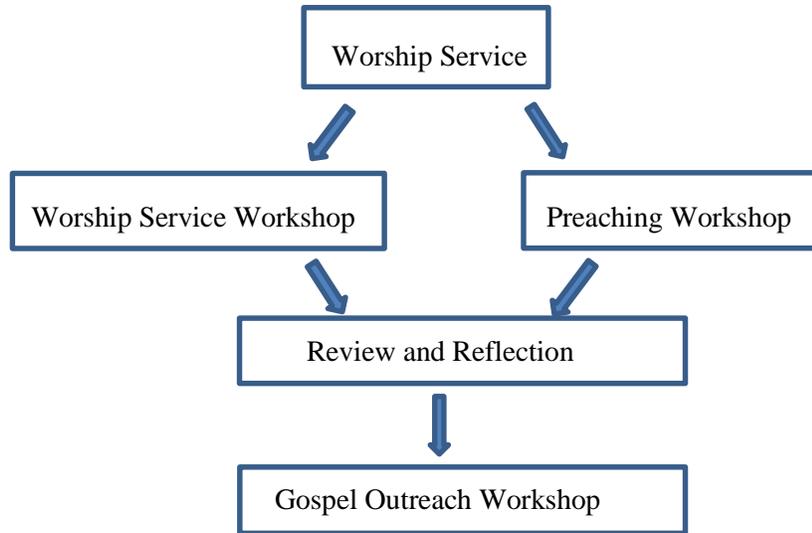


Figure 7: Operating Model 1 for Monthly Worship Service and Workshops

2. **Operating Model 2:** The activities of the two interest groups took place on various days of the month as determined by the sub-committees. The session was led by a designated leader who shared his or her experience in a particular interest area. Another member gave a brief gospel-related message either in the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the session (see Figure 8).



Figure 8: Operating Model 2 for Interest Groups

3. **Operating Model 3:** Similar to Operating Model 2, visitations of the coffee outreach and small town outreach took place on various days of the month as determined by the respective sub-committees. As shown in Figure 9, the activity usually began with a joint gathering of the groups at the church with a message, Scripture reading, and prayer. This was followed by some teaching of skills by the same pastor that led the gospel outreach workshop, and some logistics discussions. The various groups then took about an hour to go to separate places for outreach including McDonald’s restaurants, shopping malls, and a seniors residence. The small town outreach activities tended to take a little longer because of the distances and driving times involved.

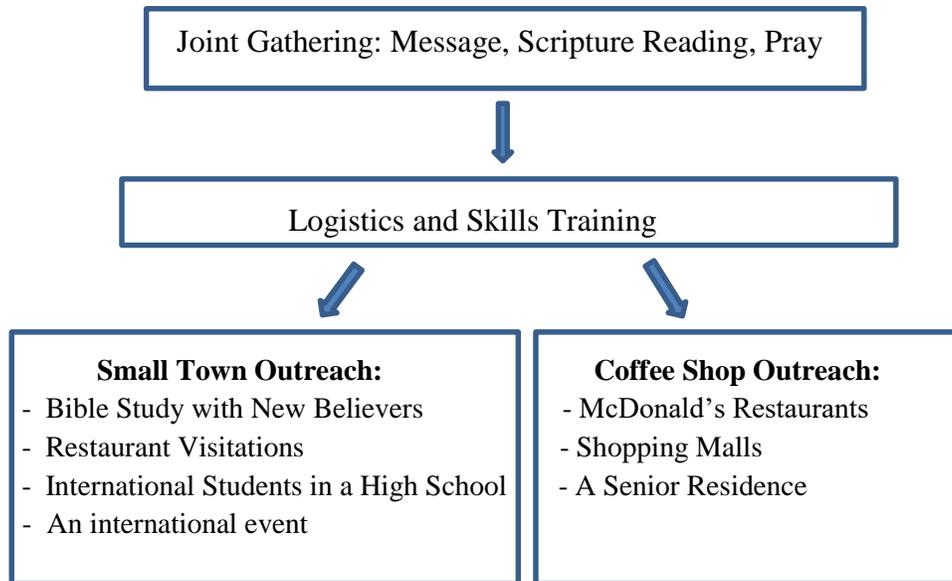


Figure 9: Operating Model 3 for Coffee and Small Town Outreach

PROJECT PARTICIPATION

During the 7-month period from January to July 2013, the project had a total of 40 participants who had attended at least one of the activities. Even though we were primarily focusing on senior Christians, we also encouraged partnership with the younger generation. As a result, about 20 % of the participants in the project were below the age of 55. The partnership worked extremely well as we were able to combine the energy of the younger generation, and the wisdom and experience of the older generation in carrying out the activities. Table 1 provides a summary of the frequency of occurrence and attendance of each type of activity in the project. Note that not all the 40 participants attended all the activities and visitors from outside the church were included in the calculation of attendance for the interest group meetings. Also the total number of times that any activity had taken place can be obtained by adding up the numbers in the first result column of Table 2 and that reached 80, showing the intensity of the 7-month project.

Table 2: Frequency of Occurrence of Activities in the *Tribe of Caleb* Project

	Frequency of occurrence	Minimum attendance	Maximum attendance	Average attendance
Workshops				
• Worship service leading	5	14	16	14.6
• Preaching	6	6	12	9
• Bible study leading	5	9	13	10
• Gospel outreach	5	14	15	14.2
Practical Training Exercises				
• Worship and preaching	6	17	26	22.7
• Coffee visitation	17	2	5	3.2
• Small town visitation	13	2	6	2.7
• Interest group A (cooking, flower arrangement)	5	9	51	23.2
• Interest group B (photo editing, photography)	7	8	27	18.3
• Bible study leading	5	9	13	10
Planning				
• Committee Meetings	6	10	12	11

PROJECT EVALUATION

Evaluation was conducted throughout the project in the form of ongoing monthly progress reviews as well as at its conclusion through a survey and three sharing sessions. Participants in the project had opportunities during each monthly review meeting to provide feedback and share their experiences. At these review meetings, all the suggestions were captured by myself and were used to shape the project. The first of the three project-end sharing sessions took place in June 2013 and since not all the participants were present, a second one was held in the following month. In both sessions, participants provided feedback and completed a total of 18 survey forms. In August, I organized an additional special gathering for all the participants and 21 people attended it. It was a special celebration meeting with dinner and a simple worship service as well as a session of *lectio divina*, which was new to the majority of the participants. We ended the gathering by praying for the continuing work. In total, 25 different participants came to the three sharing sessions, some of them more than once.

During these three sessions, the participants told stories, reflected on the 7-month project, and provided suggestions for the future. I recorded the stories as they were told. This was followed by the process of data analysis by studying all the stories and removing any irrelevant and redundant information. This took a few cycles and eventually preliminary key concepts

started to emerge by which I was able to organize the stories into meaningful categories and structure based on which I could begin interpreting the data and later drew final conclusions. This was based on Stringer's approach which started with identifying key concepts, distilling the data, analyzing and interpreting the data, and finally drawing conclusions (Stringer 2007, 102-103). After the project was concluded, many of the activities continued into August of 2013 and beyond.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have described the *Tribe of Caleb* project and outlined how the work began, the way the project was conducted, and the various activities that took place.

This chapter has described a significant number of activities that had happened during the short 7-month period. The training both in the form of workshops and practical outreach activities was intensive. These activities could serve as guidelines for other churches who want to consider implementing a similar project as the actual activities could vary depending on the specific church and the local environment that the church is in. The outcome of the project, key observations and interpretation of the results, as well as activities that continued after the completion of the project will be addressed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUTCOMES AND INTERPRETATION

The *Tribe of Caleb* pilot project involved 40 participants during a period of seven months of worship services, workshops and practical training exercises. Almost all of the participants indicated through the monthly review, survey and sharing sessions that they had learned some new skills and discovered new areas to serve. Many even developed a practice of continuing to serve regularly in the church. This provided evidence that the change introduced by the project had a positive outcome and impact on the participants. The monthly review meetings were very important for guiding the progress of the project, the survey and sharing sessions conducted at the conclusion of the project confirmed that the project was viable and did motivate and mobilize the participants to serve. After the project concluded, many activities were integrated into existing church ministries. In this chapter, the outcomes of the project will first be presented, followed by some key observations, and reflection and interpretation of the results.

OUTCOMES

In this section, the outcomes obtained from the monthly review reports and the end-of-project survey will first be discussed, followed by stories heard during the various sharing sessions. Pseudonyms were used in the stories to conceal their identities.

Monthly Review Reports

The first kind of qualitative feedback was obtained from the monthly review reports. After each monthly Friday afternoon worship service, there was a 30-minute gathering in which members shared their experiences of the previous month in three general areas: nature of the activities undertaken, new experiences gained, and new lessons learned. This information turned out to be crucial in shaping the project and determining its logistics as it went forward, as can be seen in the following examples.

Members were active in the monthly review meetings to share their exciting outreach experiences. Since the participants had varying degrees of success in their efforts, the stories served to encourage each other in their own individual encounters. Early in the project, our efforts resulted in bringing two people to Christ in a small town outreach visitation, and this motivated the members to go forward boldly throughout the rest of the project. Since we welcomed partnership with the younger generation, Jena, a much younger member of the church was encouraged to come to join the project. She accepted our invitation and came to share how she brought a terminal cancer patient to Christ in the hospital. Jena reported seeing an amazing vision in which white light filled the room at the moment of conversion. This was another encouraging story that gave motivation to the members.

During these monthly meetings, many suggestions were made to help the project run more efficiently. Regarding our coffee outreach activities, because of the large number of participants, members suggested that we should divide ourselves into smaller groups. As a result, this significantly increased our effectiveness. Then, after a few outings, members discovered that a certain group of retirees had fixed day of the week, time of the day, and place of gathering for coffee (every Tuesday afternoon at the Ottawa Billings Bridge Shopping Mall, for example). With this information, our coffee outreach people planned our logistics accordingly to make our outreach visits more effective.

Similarly, for the small town outreach, members suggested that we should send smaller teams to different places instead of one larger team to one single place in order to maximize our effectiveness. Another excellent suggestion was that when we visited Smiths Falls, we should make arrangements with a local Alliance Church so that our Bible study meetings could take place in that church. Then in our interest group activities, members suggested that we should expand the length of the “coffee-break” in the middle of the session to allow more time for interaction between members and visitors.

These are just a few examples of how the project benefited from Stringer’s “look, think, act” approach (Stringer 2007, 8). The group used these monthly meetings to review and reflect on the past month, revise the course of action, and act upon the revisions. This allowed the project to run more effectively and shaped it as it evolved over the months that followed. Let me now turn to the quantitative part of the end-of-project survey.

End-of-Project Survey - Quantitative Results

At the end of the project, a survey was conducted, with 18 members completing the survey forms (see Appendix A) on which were listed 15 project activities. Members were invited to indicate the activities they had participated in prior to and after the *Tribe of Caleb* project. The results therefore showed a clear picture of the new activities that they had engaged themselves in as a result of the project and these are shown in Table 3.

In this Table, the numbers in the “Before the Project” and “After the Project” results columns represent the number of times that members had provided a positive answer to the corresponding question regarding the specific activity item. The sum totals of the first two results columns indicate 87 activity items for “Before the Project” and 159 for “After the Project”, an increase of 83 % with a total of 72 new activity items. This increase corresponds to an average of 4.0 new activity items for each of the 18 participants who responded to the survey.

Table 3: Quantitative Results of the End-of-Project Survey (number of participants: 18)

		Before the Project	After the Project	Difference	Rank
Worship Service					
1	Have you ever chaired a worship service?	4	6	+ 2	8
2	Have you ever served as an usher in a worship service?	12	14	+ 2	8
3	Have you ever led singing in a worship service?	5	5	0	
4	Have you ever led the reading of the Scripture in a worship service?	5	7	+ 2	8
5	Have you ever assigned worship team duties to others?	4	6	+ 2	8
Bible Study					
6	Have you ever led a Bible study?	9	12	+ 3	7
7	Have you ever learned how to lead a Bible study?	6	13	+ 7	4
Preaching					
8	Have you ever preached in a worship service?	4	6	+ 2	8
9	Have you ever been involved in providing constructive feedback to preaching?	4	6	+ 2	8
Gospel Outreach					
10	Have you ever received any training to share the gospel?	10	15	+ 5	6
11	Have you ever been to a coffee shop to try to share your faith with a stranger?	7	16	+ 9	2
12	Have you ever been to a small town to try to share your faith with strangers?	4	12	+ 8	3
13	Have you ever tried to share your faith with someone in an interest group?	4	17	+ 13	1
Organizing and Planning					
14	Have you ever organized a worship service?	4	10	+ 6	5
15	Have you ever participated in any planning committee at the church?	5	14	+ 9	2
Total		87	159	+ 72	

By examining the “rank” column of the Table, it is easy to discover that the top five activity items that members had participated in as a result of the project, listed in order of the rating are:

- 1) Have you ever tried to share your faith with someone in a common interest group?
- 2) Have you ever been to a coffee shop to try to share your faith with a stranger?
- 3) Have you ever participated in any planning committee at the church?
- 4) Have you ever been to a small town to try to share your faith with strangers?
- 5) Have you ever learned how to lead a Bible study?

Note that even though activity items 2) and 3) were listed separately, they have the same rank.

From these results, one can note that the first, second, and fourth items are all related to encountering new people, whether it happened in a coffee shop, in an interest group, or in a small town outreach event. The third item tells us that many members had not previously been involved in a church planning committee, and this project gave them opportunities to be exposed to this kind of work. The fifth item is the opportunity to learn to lead a Bible study. I was told later that some members have been leading Bible studies in their respective cell groups using the skills learned in the workshop.

End-of-Project Survey - Qualitative Results

The second part of the survey was qualitative in nature and was designed to help the participants express their experiences, explain their perceptions, and frame their learnings in a survey according to three guiding questions. The results are summarized in Table 4 and for ease of presentation, similar comments have been grouped together to show their frequency of occurrence and hence their importance.

The following provides a brief analysis of the responses reported in Table 4. Note that in some cases members might not have always answered the questions in the way expected:

- Regarding the first question, “What is one new technique that I learned in the project,” there are 16 responses. Out of these, seven were related to getting to know new friends and were of relational development nature. Three were related to leading Bible studies and two to preaching. The relatively low number related to preaching was not unexpected due to the number of people participating in this type of training.

Table 4: Qualitative Results of the End-of -Survey

1. A new technique that I learned in the project	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting to know new friends (3 times) • Getting to know new friends and talk with them (3 times) • Getting to know new friends during coffee time • Learning to lead Bible study (3 times) • Learning to be patient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to chair a worship service • Learning to preach • Learning gospel preaching techniques • Receiving ministry training • Learning to read Scripture in worship service
2. A valuable experience that I gained in the project	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small town evangelism • Getting to know new friends • Getting to know new friends in small towns • Visiting non-believers • Talking about the gospel • Gospel sharing together with brothers and sisters • Preparing to preach in only a few days • Preaching the gospel • Preparing expository preaching, learned from others • Public speaking, introducing the gospel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling that God is in control • Experiencing God’s presence and God is responsible for spiritual growth • Unity, passion of members • Importance of team work • United together in a cooking demonstration • Training helps me • Stepping out of comfort zone • Learning to study the Bible, skills to communicate with others • Getting to know more about church events • Witnessing the growth of new believers
3. One technique that will help me in my future ministry	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting to know new friends and bring them to church • Training helping me to do gospel outreach • Getting some formal training in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building up experience to preach • Coming closer to God • Gaining faith to serve • Learning to work in oneness, leading to better ministry

- Regarding the second question, “What is one valuable experience that I gained in the project,” there were 20 responses as some of the 18 members provided more than one

response. Six of these were related to reaching out to people with the gospel, and four to preaching. The rest of the responses were about knowing that God was in control and the importance of team work, both of which helped strengthen confidence in approaching unfamiliar tasks.

- Regarding the third question, “What is one technique that will help me in my future ministry,” there were only 7 responses and they referred largely to the gospel outreach training and the learning opportunity they had in working together with other members to serve God.

From these responses, one can note that the most valuable experience that members felt they gained was to interact with new people with the purpose of bringing the gospel to them. They experienced God’s intervention in their activities in various ways, and even though things did not always turn out as expected, they did lead to positive outcomes.

Sharing Sessions - Qualitative Responses

In addition to the survey and monthly review meetings, three sharing sessions were organized for members to openly share their experiences. This was done in accordance with Stringer’s approach that participants should be provided with the opportunities to talk extensively about their experiences and perceptions (Stringer 2007, 87). Although provision was made for anyone who preferred to share in a private interview session, everyone felt comfortable to share openly.

Prior to the sharing sessions, the participants were invited to expand on the same three opinion questions to which they responded in the survey, but were given the freedom to share outside this guideline. Many just went ahead with excitement to say what they had on their mind. I captured the stories as they were told and later analysed the data and organized them in the following areas. Note that for privacy reasons, pseudonyms are used in the stories.

Learning to Do Gospel Outreach

Many of the members found it difficult at first to share the gospel with others. I believe this is a common difficulty for many Christians. Lilian came from another church and attended all our *Tribe of Caleb* monthly worship services. She said it was one thing to talk with others, but another to share the gospel. In her opinion, the training workshops and opportunities to do outreach were very useful for her to learn the techniques and apply them immediately afterwards.

May had some experiences in doing gospel outreach before the project. She said it was hard to do but this project had provided some new techniques that she could use. She was excited

even when a prospect showed just a bit of interest in the gospel. In one incident, a woman turned her back on May while she was trying to start a conversation with her in a coffee shop. She was frustrated but was encouraged by other members around her.

Alice also found it hard to get to know strangers. The first time she went to McDonald's, the situation did not turn out as expected. When she sat down next to some people with whom she wanted to talk, they got up after a little while and walked away. But she was encouraged by listening to testimonies of other members who had more success.

Both Anthony and Carol found the gospel outreach workshop useful. Specifically they learned how to begin conversations on topics of mutual interest, explore ways to sustain the conversation, and were able to use the techniques learned in the workshop. Both had opportunities to share short messages in interest group gatherings.

At one of the Tax Clinics that our church organized, about 400 people came during the day to file their income tax returns. This was a free service provided to the community. Since there were not enough volunteers, the visitors had to wait for their turn. Annie took the opportunity to talk to many visitors that day, inviting them to come to our interest groups and even collecting their email addresses for future contact. I later asked her where she found the courage to talk to strangers with such ease. She said she worked as a marketing agent when she first started her career and was comfortable in doing "cold calls." It was amazing that God put gifted people in the right place to do Kingdom work.

Learning to Preach

Learning to preach was yet another step out of the comfort zone for all of the lay preachers. Al had never preached before. He said he needed a lot of preparation before he could preach. Amazingly, God provided material for his message. He practised about 2-3 hours every day at home for many days leading to the service, and did well. He said he was surprised that his wife, Nancy, who, after having listened at home to the same sermon so many times, still came to the worship service!

When Alice was asked to preach, she hesitated but was encouraged by other members. She was reminded that this preaching opportunity could be used to glorify God. She reflected on this and finally agreed to take up the challenge. Since it was a message about women and it was close to Mother's Day, I invited her to preach in the regular Sunday Worship Service. She did well and was commended by many. Later she shared that she experienced the presence and guidance of God throughout the entire process.

Frank had recently graduated from seminary and had preached only a couple of times in monthly worship services held at a nursing home. He said the opportunity to preach was a grace

from God and a valuable experience. He shared that he had made some improvements and was able to use many examples from his seminary studies in his preaching. Being concerned that it might not go well, he practised hard at home, gained a lot of confidence, and delivered a good message.

Learning to Trust God

During the first small town visit, we went to Smiths Falls. Through a common friend, we were introduced to a family. The father was a devoted Christian, but both his wife and daughter did not know the gospel. We made an appointment for a second visit, during which four of us went and shared the gospel with them. To our pleasant surprise, both accepted Christ. Richard first brought the mother to Christ and I the daughter immediately after. Richard said later that this was not the first time he partnered with others to share the gospel, and he would usually pray while his partner was doing the talking. As mentioned earlier, this was a piece of great news that was brought back to the monthly review gathering and it became a great encouragement throughout the project.

In one of the interest group gatherings in which cooking curry chicken was the topic, very unexpectedly, over 50 people showed up. Even though there were enough ingredients, the core group of three people did not plan for such a big attendance, and worried that they would not be able to prepare a dish for everyone at the meeting. In the end, participants outside the core group voluntarily stepped forward to help, and as a result, everything worked out smoothly. Annie later shared that God was working behind the scene even though to her things seemed so chaotic. The members were working together in unity for God and not for self. She was touched and recognized that God was in charge.

Since many Mandarin-speaking people also attended the curry chicken cooking event, it was necessary to provide the cooking instructions in Mandarin as well. Violet was the only member who was fluent in both Cantonese and Mandarin but she had never done interpretation before. Without any preparation, she came forward because of the circumstances and did a great job. She was very happy because she was able to do it with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and discovered that she had a good ability for interpretation.

Interests Multiplying Rapidly

Shortly after the project was launched, the first planning committee was held to identify coordinators and sub-committee chairs for the many activities. There was significant amount of interests among the participants and the positions were quickly taken up. Now, as the number of activities started to increase, it became increasingly difficult for me to keep track of everything that was happening. At the same time, I knew that I had to collect adequate data for my project. When this need was raised in a monthly review meeting, Annie, who was a former wireless

company executive, volunteered to help. After a number of trials and errors in trying to find the best data collection method, we adapted a spread sheet format to keep track of all the key information, such as the number of participants, the nature of the activity, the details of the outcome, etc. This turned out to be a great tool for the project.

Sam had retired recently from the federal government. He told us that it was very rewarding to be able to spend more time serving God now than before. He learned to meet strangers, strike conversations with them, and be patient even if there might not be any immediate results. He was very encouraged to see new believers grow, and for himself to be able to learn, grow and serve together with others.

Since a few of the members were new believers, they were not familiar with church organization, meetings, and procedures. They said they learned a lot about church administration through our committee planning meetings. This was consistent with the result of the survey in which the activity item related to the participation in a planning committee at the church was ranked second/third highest in terms of new learning as a result of the project.

Finally, Shirley, who was in charge of the cooking interest group, appreciated the team spirit of the members. She said team work had brought great results, especially in the curry chicken cooking class. For a group like this in which there were many talented members, she liked to encourage people to become self-motivated, and also welcomed the views of others so that all could get involved, independent of what gifts they might have.

Outreach as a Way of Life

One of the purposes of the *Tribe of Caleb* project was to help members develop a habit of serving God in their daily routines of life, hence making their ministry missional. I observed that this was happening a few months after we started the coffee outreach. For example, one evening, my wife and I had supper together with a couple, Tom and Angela, in a Chinese restaurant. When the waitress came to serve us, Angela started a casual conversation with her, and later said we should befriend the waitress and try to bring her to church. This was outside the regular activities of the project, and I sensed at the time that a habit was beginning to develop even outside the parameters of the project.

Al and Nancy went on a cruise during the course of the project. When they came back, Al told us that he deliberately gave up a popular 9 pm show on the cruise and took time to talk to one of the workers whom he got to know earlier in the day. He even managed to share his faith with him.

Annie, who participated in our small town outreach, happened to have her grandson studying in one of the small towns that we had been visiting. She was familiar with the area and

continued on beyond the completion of the project to visit Chinese restaurants there, bringing to them the Herald Monthly, a popular Christian newspaper that is in wide circulation in Canada.

Contagious Influence to the Younger Generation

In the initial design of the project, I hoped that the active involvement of the senior Christians would positively impact the younger generation. There were signs of that happening as well. Two months after the project started, one younger Christian made an interesting suggestion to video tape the ongoing activities of the project. Her intention was to use the video to motivate the younger people in the church to serve and to convey the message that active ministry should not be limited or restricted by age. Even though the idea did not get carried out because of concerns of privacy issues, it showed that the project had begun to have some impact on the younger generation of the congregation.

Another young member of the church choir invited us to present a hymn at a regular Sunday worship service during a time when the choir usually took a break. After a few practices led by this choir member, the group presented a hymn that touched the hearts of many younger members of the congregation. This member later explained her conviction that as senior Christians we needed to demonstrate our commitment to God, setting an example for the younger folks to follow and step forward to serve.

In the small town outreach, we continued our monthly Bible study with the two new believers in Smiths Falls for over a year after their conversion. Instead of having members of the project leading the studies all the time, two younger members of the church accepted our invitation to come along from time to time to assist with the workload. The two new believers were eventually baptized in our church in December 2014.

Unexpected Events

Even though the project had an enthusiastic start and was gaining momentum, a few concerns that I had at the beginning included the possible loss of interest, lack of dedication and commitment, and other unexpected events as the project continued. While the former two concerns did not happen, there were indeed some unexpected events. One member discovered that she had cancer and this took her and her husband away for the remaining part of the project. Another two couples moved houses, resulting in their absence from the project for almost two months. A fourth couple went on a lengthy missions trip towards the later part of the project. There were also unavoidable circumstances such as vacations, out of town business meetings, family events, etc. If the project had not started with a critical mass, these unexpected events could have caused disruptions and discouragement. Our attendance did drop slightly towards the end of the project as it got closer to the summer months. However, the dedication and

commitment of those who were able to attend enabled the project to continue without noticeable impact.

Summary

In summary, the above stories represent the experiences and perceptions of many of the participants in the context of reaching out to non-believers, experiencing God in control, benefiting from the strength of team-work, and developing their talents for God. The stories were shared in an open and friendly environment. Such an opportunity of sharing was useful to allow them to express freely the personal experiences they had built up through training, and as a result, helping them to gain confidence and remove some inhibitions from their timidity.

CONSERVING THE FRUITS OF OUR EFFORTS

Even though the *Tribe of Caleb* project concluded officially at the end of July 2013, the activities have continued in various forms. The Friday afternoon worship service has been integrated into the church's monthly Tuesday evening worship service. Members who had participated in the worship service training workshops continue to lead worship services. One member took up a new task of assigning worship duties to workers, and five people who had participated in the preaching workshops have taken up preaching assignments here.

While the interest groups had begun at different times during the span of the project, they also concluded at different times. For example, the cooking, flower arrangement, and photo-editing interest group activities which started during the course of the project all ended before August 2013. The photography interest group however continued until October 2014. A new Origami interest group did not begin until several weeks after the project had concluded, and in the course of its meetings, one person was brought to Christ.

Two of our members took up new ministries. Kent became the coordinator of a line-dance and ping-pong interest group which is holding activities twice a month in the church, and Samson has taken up the position of a ping-pong coach in a social club in a Chinese community. He shared that he constantly explores the opportunity to tell Bible stories, putting Biblical teaching into practice. The interest groups have all been integrated into the church's gospel outreach ministry.

As far as coffee outreach is concerned, no special activities have been planned after the project. Many members have already developed a habit of getting to know new people and engaging them in conversations in their daily lives. In terms of small town outreach, the work was integrated into the church's Missions Ministry. As a side development apart from the *Tribe of Caleb* project, our church has been involved in providing monthly pastoral support to a Mandarin-speaking fellowship group in Deep River, a small town about two hours' drive from

Ottawa. In June 2014, I was invited to baptize three new believers, the first of this type of event ever in the 12-year history of this fellowship group. I was accompanied by eight members of the project who provided great encouragement and support to the people there. They were even able to engage in outreach conversations in Mandarin with a few non-Christians there.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

The previous sections have provided project outcomes in the form of stories and showed how the project activities had been integrated into existing church ministries. From the qualitative and quantitative data gained through this project, some key observations have emerged.

The quantitative data point to the fact that the participants of the project had engaged themselves in a good number of new activities, with an average of 4.0 new activity items per participant. They had learned new skills and techniques through the workshops and practical training exercises in real life situations. The qualitative data correspond well with the quantitative data, as can be seen from the many testimonies shared. But the most obvious outcome of the project is the great interest in reaching out to new people for the purpose of sharing the gospel. This is something that greatly encouraged the church leadership and that, as stewards of the Kingdom, they must leverage wisely.

Members appreciated the opportunity to interact with new people and bring the gospel message to them. They experienced God in the process and witnessed many positive outcomes. Having first received training in gospel outreach and then the opportunity to put it into practice, they had indeed come out of their comfort zones and felt stretched to the limit. Then some of the members were given the opportunity to preach. This was another challenging exercise. Many of them did not expect that they could do so, but agreed to step up to the challenge and made good effort in preparing for and accomplishing the task well.

There were also those who did not expect such a large turn-out in the curry chicken cooking interest group gathering. The size of the event was beyond any initial planning expectations and members had to trust God and experience the abundant divine provision in a helpless situation. The effort of improvising unprepared interpretation was yet another good example of people responding to the challenge. So overall, we can conclude that participants had largely stepped out of their comfort zones and experienced how God had led them through in the process. In spite of these very positive outcomes, we also experienced some negative circumstances. These were challenges of everyday life which the wise leader must be prepared to accept and cope with the unexpected without panic or surprise.

The project required a lot of initial planning, but as it evolved, interests multiplied rapidly and activities took off. This could be attributed to the fact that all members shared the vision of

the project, and that they were given the freedom to serve according to their talents. Because of their passion, leaders quickly emerged and took up key positions. They recruited members and held planning meetings. Fuelled by interest, it did not take long for them to get engaged and release their creative energy to carry out the tasks. The project was entirely owned by the participants as they had trusted God one step at a time in the process. I did not have to be involved in every one of the decision-makings, and the leaders were able to handle the operation without requiring much of my intervention.

REFLECTION AND INTERPRETATION

The *Tribe of Caleb* pilot project was of a different nature from the other projects that I had conducted before, being different in at least two ways: First, it resembled a complex adaptive system (CAS) with the two key features of unpredictability and self-organization. Second, I had to adapt my leadership style to fit in such a system to make it work. Let me first address the discussions on complex adaptive systems.

The *Tribe of Caleb* Project: A Complex Adaptive System

Different descriptions of what a CAS is exist (Olson 2001; Westley 2007), but a comprehensive description given by Donde Ashmos Plowman et al helpfully emphasizes the unpredictable characteristics:

Some of the characteristics of complex adaptive systems include: (1) they are made up of many agents who act and interact with each other in unpredictable ways; (2) they are sensitive to initial conditions; (3) they adjust their behavior in the aggregate in unpredictable ways; (4) they oscillate between stability and instability; and (5) they produce emergent actions when approaching disequilibrium. (Plowman 2007, 342)

A CAS is also a self-organizing system which changes and evolves by itself without much management or control, within the bounds of some simple rules. These rules, which could include the objectives and goals, will produce coherent behaviour in a CAS. A self-organizing system will also self-correct (Dickens 2013). Quoted by Plowman in his paper, “The Role of Leadership in Emergent, Self-Organization” (Plowman et al 2007, 343), Chiles et al explain what self-organization means in this context:

In self-organizing systems, order comes from the actions of interdependent agents who exchange information, take actions, and continuously adapt to feedback about others’ actions rather than from the imposition of an overall plan by a central authority. (Chiles 2004)

As the *Tribe of Caleb* project was introduced, the normal and traditional operating environment of our church was disrupted. Although the project idea was new, it was quickly

accepted and adopted by the leaders and participants. It did not take them long to tune in to the vision and objectives, knowing the boundaries and simple rules of the project. One clear example of self-organization took place during the first meeting of the interest group planning sub-committee in which members got excited and the group took on a life of its own. As they were encouraged to do some brain-storming, they came up with about 30 different ideas that they wanted to see implemented. As the discussions started to become chaotic, falling into a state of disequilibrium, and did not go anywhere, I introduced a new rule, setting a limit that no more than three interest groups were to be formed, and eventually the decision was made to have two groups which could accommodate one to two topics of interest each. This kind of leadership action is described as a “punctuated equilibrium” in which a leader introduces chaos to take the system out of rigidity so that it will settle down to a new equilibrium (Dickens, 2013). In a quick review of the numerous examples described earlier in this chapter, this project indeed demonstrated features of self-organization and unpredictability, both inherent of a CAS.

Leadership Style Adapted for the *Tribe of Caleb* Project

I will now turn to the second aspect of CAS, which is about leadership style. As I reflected on the organization of the project and my leadership style, I realized that my usual leadership style is a combination of “up front” and “along-side”. Usually when I introduce a new project or idea, I would first share the vision with a few people and then form a team. I would then develop objectives, expected outcomes, and a plan, and get consensus and buy-in from the team before implementing the project. After all, it is team work. I would usually serve as leader and conduct regular progress meetings to make sure the project runs smoothly and according to plan. At the end of the project, there would be a review meeting to draw conclusions and identify lessons learned.

Knowing that this was a project which had the features of a CAS, I modified my usual role and style of leadership and adapted it to this particular situation (Cannell 2011). Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard reinforce this view and point out that when leaders do not match their style of leadership to the maturity of the people they are leading, failure is the result (Mind Tools 2014). They advocate the theory of situational leadership:

Instead of using just one style, successful leaders should change their leadership styles based on the maturity of the people they are leading and the details of the task. Using this theory, leaders should be able to place more or less emphasis on the task, and more or less emphasis on the relationships with the people they are leading, depending on what is needed to get the job done successfully. (Mind Tools 2014)

Using this approach in the *Tribe of Caleb* project, I started by taking a step back and serving as a participant and observer from the very beginning of the project, while maintaining

my role in leading the monthly overall planning meetings. As it turned out, all the leaders had an active participation with strong interests and things went well without much of my intervention.

As I was pursuing this situational leadership style, I was aware that I was not following a detailed plan anymore but was delegating away many of my usual leadership functions. I did share with the planning committee at the beginning of the project that I did not have a concise plan, and was indeed trusting God to take us forward one step at a time. I thought if I had to maintain control everywhere, the outcome would have been very different. Other leaders in such situations might have withdrawn, as many of their ideas might not have been carried out, leading to frustration and a lower level of fruitfulness, and perhaps project failure.

In considering the writings of Plowman, I found confirmation that an adaptive leadership approach had been best in my ministry context. He first raises a question:

From a complexity view, leaders do not direct change or control future outcomes, as traditional leadership research suggests. If leaders cannot envision and predict the future state of a system, if they do not direct change in complex systems because it emerges from the interactions among people throughout the system, what, then, do leaders do? (Plowman et al 2007, 344)

Then in response to his own question, he quotes R. Marion and M. Uhl-Bien:

Leaders cannot control the future (e.g., determinism) because in complex systems such as organizations, unpredictable (and sometimes unexplainable) internal dynamics will determine future conditions. (Marion and Uhl-Bien 2001, 391)

In my role as leader, I had experienced the features of unpredictability and self-organization in the *Tribe of Caleb* project, as were to be expected in a CAS. By adopting the situational style of leadership, I was able to adapt to the specific situation and allow the stated objectives to direct the group in the desired direction.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have described the outcomes of the *Tribe of Caleb* project obtained from the three measurement tools: end-of-project survey, monthly project reviews, and end-of-project sharing sessions. Based on these outcomes, I have made some key observations and, upon reflection, provided interpretation of these observations. The outcomes have shown that the *Tribe of Caleb* project did possess the key features of a complex adaptive system, and have demonstrated the benefits of exercising situational leadership by adapting my leadership style to the situation in which the project was conducted. These lessons may be crucial to leaders who

intend to lead other church projects as many of these church projects including the *Tribe of Caleb* project, based on my experience, possess the characteristics of a complex adaptive system.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The focus of the *Tribe of Caleb* project was to develop a series of activities that would equip, train, and provide serving opportunities in the local church for the Cantonese-speaking Christians in their senior years. The purpose of the project was to mobilize these “second-mile” Christians to engage in active church ministries.

A CHALLENGE TRANSFORMED INTO AN OPPORTUNITY

With the aging of the population in general, and the decline in immigration of younger Cantonese-speaking people into the country, there has been a rapid increase in the average age of the Cantonese-speaking congregations in Chinese churches in Canada. As explained in Chapter 1, many of these senior Christians are now about to retire or have retired not only from their secular careers but also from church ministries. Some of them however are willing to be involved in active Christian ministries but do not have the training or opportunities to do so. Others may tend to choose to take it easy, stay inactive, and retire from ministry altogether. There are yet others who have come to know the Lord in the latter part of their lives and are willing to serve, but lack the training to do so. The *Tribe of Caleb* project focused on providing training, practical exercises, and serving opportunities for these “second-mile” Christians. The concept of “second-mile” did not mean to create a second career for these people. Rather, it was intended to instill in the Cantonese-speaking senior Christians the idea of purpose, finishing well, becoming useful to God’s Kingdom, and setting an example for the next generation.

THE PROJECT THAT ADDRESSED THE CHALLENGE

The *Tribe of Caleb* project built upon the C&MA values of Deeper Christian Life and Missions, and was inspired by the Biblical Caleb who, at 85 years of age, continued to serve the Lord. He had been faithful to God and his life served as a compelling example of lifelong serving. Other examples in the Bible as well as throughout the history of the Christian church also support this principle.

From the social science perspective, the reality of aging, coupled with an increased life expectancy, creates tremendous opportunities for seniors, society, and the church. Today, people in the third quarter of life are more active and healthier than in years past. In society at large, many seniors are prepared to continue to do meaningful part-time or full-time work, with or without pay, and to engage in new learning, to fulfill earlier dreams, or to pursue new interests. The aging reality also impacts the church, which in turn needs to be prepared to respond to it. Unfortunately most churches are satisfied to merely minister to the needs of this group, without paying attention to engaging them in meaningful ministry. The *Tribe of Caleb* project was

intended to challenge seniors to lifelong serving in areas that they may not have had opportunities to engage themselves in before.

The project used Action Research as the methodology in which action, research, and reflection took place. The members of the project took action by participating in training and outreach activities. There was research in exploring how participants behaved and responded to new initiatives that were designed to bring positive changes in themselves. There was ongoing reflection that took place every month in the form of review meetings. Inputs received were used to steer the project forward by making ongoing adjustments.

PURPOSES ACHIEVED THROUGH POSITIVE OUTCOMES

The 7-month project took place during the period from January to July 2013 with 40 participants. These were mainly senior Christians, with about 20 % below the age of 55, showing a good balance and partnership between the older and younger generations. Among the senior Christians, a few were mature leaders and had taken up the role of activity coordinators and sub-committees chairs. Even though they were not assigned the specific duties of a mentor, some of them were serving in this capacity throughout the project. The project had four types of training activities and four types of practical exercises. These were all well attended. Quantitative and qualitative tools were used to measure the outcome of the project. The quantitative data pointed to the fact that the participants of the project had engaged themselves in a good number of new activities, averaging 4.0 new activity items per participant. They had learned new skills and techniques through the workshops and practical training exercises in real-life situations. The qualitative data agreed well with the quantitative data as can be seen from the many stories told. But the most obvious outcome was the great interest in reaching out to new people for the purpose of sharing the gospel.

The positive outcomes demonstrated that the project was useful, viable and sustainable. Overall, participants had largely stepped out of their comfort zones and experienced the leading of God in the process. New believers had started to serve, and “old-timers” had become active again in serving. The activities of the project continue in various forms after its conclusion, having been integrated into existing church ministries. The project therefore achieved the main purpose of mobilizing the “second-mile” Christians to actively serve in local church ministries.

The secondary purposes were also accomplished. As a result of this initiative, OCAC was able to undertake outreach visitations to the small towns surrounding Ottawa, thus fulfilling the Great Commission in ways it may not have already been doing. The younger generation partnered with the senior Christians in this project and many were impacted by the examples of lifelong serving demonstrated by the senior Christians. Throughout the project and afterwards, there was evidence that habits of serving God had been developed in the participants’ daily routines of life.

LESSONS LEARNED

In this concluding chapter, it may be useful to identify the lessons learned that had made the project successful. This would be especially useful for another leader who may intend to implement a similar project in another church in the future. These lessons include:

1. It was important to share the vision of this new project with church leadership, bring them on-board, and obtain their support and approval before the project was launched. This was necessary to avoid any potential future misunderstanding, especially when the nature of this kind of project was somewhat disruptive to regular church activities. The project was intentionally planned as a team effort, not an independent activity based on self-interest alone, but a concerted effort of the church as a whole.
2. Before rushing in to address imagined need or to correct imagined obstacles to ministry, it was necessary to first gain an understanding of why senior Christians in the congregation tended to withdraw from serving. Unless the researcher had a thorough understanding of the participants like in my situation, it was important to research thoroughly to discover what reasons individuals may have had for refraining from or dropping out of ministry activity during their third quarter of life. Without this information it would not have been possible to accurately design an effective means of addressing their obstacles and directing them towards the responsible use of their talents for serving the Master. Conscious or unconscious reasons may have included a lack of confidence, a feeling of inadequacy, timidity, fear or angst, uselessness, and that the task belongs to someone else, etc. The training offered was then customized to address whatever reasons were understood to be holding back the individuals from active ministry.
3. It was important not to overlook the intentional role of the participants in identifying their own giftedness, interests and hopes for involvement. This resulted in providing them with meaningful training and practical involvement in tasks that they themselves had chosen from among the available options being offered. The end result was the transference of head knowledge into practical ministry activities, and a greater sense of personal achievement and satisfaction in the use of their God-given talents for the use of the Master (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27).
4. In projects like the *Tribe of Caleb* project, it is important to provide ongoing feedback opportunities so that members could regularly reflect on the activities and make adjustments and improvements as the project progressed. It was also important for the leader to help them experience God-at-work when they came to the end of their own resources, and to stretch their comfort zones and faith in unexpected situations.

5. In order to conserve the fruits of our efforts, it was important to provide follow-up opportunities to participants and empower them by commissioning them to serve in the church in the areas in which they were trained, following the conclusion of the project. It was also important for the leader to help maintain momentum, goals, objectives, direction, guidelines, boundaries, and to keep the passion ablaze after they have been integrated into regular church ministries. In retrospect, a Covenant of Service and Accountability could have been provided to help define expectations for follow-up support and ongoing encouragement. This could also have helped them to reflect, reframe their experiences, re-focus, re-energize, and re-engage in further active ministry.
6. Our experience has demonstrated the importance of having critical mass as the project began. This, accompanied by strong commitment and dedication by the members, helped to counter any unforeseen negative influences that could have affected the project.
7. A leader needs to plan for the unexpected to happen, and not to consider unexpected happenings as interruptions or obstacles as much as everyday life calling for regular adaptation of the plans. Preparation and a willingness to change should be framed so as to include openness and redirection by the Holy Spirit.
8. Adopting a situational leadership style had a positive effect on the motivation, involvement, creativity, and energy level of participants to reap an outcome which was positive and beyond expectation. This form of leadership has also commended itself for consideration in place of top-down leadership exercised in much of our present congregational life, especially in situations where activities may be unpredictable and self-organizing such as those in complex adaptive systems. Rigid leadership may be seen as a form of control that may overrule the gifting of individuals and resists the Holy Spirit who has been responsible for that gifting. Therefore it is necessary to weigh out joys and benefits against the challenges of appropriate delegation of responsibilities.

CLOSING REMARKS

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the study on the age demographics of our church shows that 47% of the Cantonese-speaking congregation or about 85 people were over the age of 55 (Chan 2011). This project involved 40 people and from my observation, about 25 of the remaining 45 people have problems of active mobility and health, and cannot do more than providing prayer support, encouragement, and advice. In this respect, a member of the project did start a regular Wednesday morning prayer meeting a few months after the conclusion of the project and it has been regularly attended even until the Fall months of 2015.

In November 2014, the outcomes of the project were presented to the Ministerium of Chinese Alliance pastors in Toronto, and were received with enthusiasm. At the presentation, it

was suggested that the project could be replicated in other Chinese Alliance churches in Canada. Since every church is unique in both characteristics and composition, experiences gained from conducting such a pilot project in various churches could be cumulative over time and shared with the entire Association of Churches, leading to even greater fruitfulness.

The reality of aging has arrived not only in our church but also in many other Chinese and non-Chinese churches in Canada. The *Tribe of Caleb* project has demonstrated success in mobilizing Cantonese-speaking senior Christians to engage in our church ministries. Others in similar ministry circumstances are encouraged to consider these initial results, to weigh the lessons learned from engaging in the project, and to evaluate the benefits experienced by both individual participants and also the congregation. Our experience suggests that there may be transferable principles that can be applied elsewhere, with due consideration given to other factors affecting their ministry context. We believe the results of this project may also have potential cross-culturally.

APPEXNDIX

PROJECT-END SURVEY FORM

		Before the Project	After the Project
Worship Service			
1	Have you ever chaired a worship service?		
2	Have you ever served as an usher in a worship service?		
3	Have you ever led singing in a worship service?		
4	Have you ever led the reading of the Scripture in a worship service?		
5	Have you ever assigned worship team duties to others?		
6	Have you ever led a Bible study?		
7	Have you ever learned how to lead a Bible study?		
8	Have you ever preached in a worship service?		
9	Have you ever been involved in providing constructive feedback to preaching?		
10	Have you ever received any training to share the gospel?		
11	Have you ever been to a coffee shop to try to share your faith with a stranger?		
12	Have you ever been to a small town to try to share your faith with strangers?		
13	Have you ever tried to share your faith with someone in an interest group?		
14	Have you ever organized a worship service?		
15	Have you ever participated in any planning committee at the church?		

Please put an "X" in the space after each of the above question as applicable.

Opinion Questions:

What is one new technique that I learned in the project? _____

What is one valuable experience that I gained in the project? _____

What is one technique that will help me in my future ministry? _____

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