

NOVEMBER 2021

NEWSLETTER

ADVANCING GOD'S KINGDOM FOR ASIA

Digital Resources, Covid-19 and Spiritual Growth in Indonesia



Bambang Budijanto, Ph.D.General Secretary of the Asia Evangelical Alliance

The COVID-19 pandemic has limited Christians' access to face-to-face spiritual nourishment provided by their own church, whether through Sunday worship, Wednesday Bible studies, cell group and discipleship gatherings or other church activities. Pastors were anxious and concerned whether online church programs, such streaming Sunday worship and Zoom Bible study sessions, would be adequate to replace the spiritual nourishment they provided before the pandemic. In

a recent (spring 2021) National Survey on Spirituality, Bilangan Research Center (BRC) of Jakarta noted that 10 months into the pandemic, as compared to the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, there was a very slim increase in the number of Christians in urban Indonesia who were actively accessing digital platforms (such YouTube videos, podcasts, and digital articles) for the purpose of spiritual nourishment and growth (3 percent).

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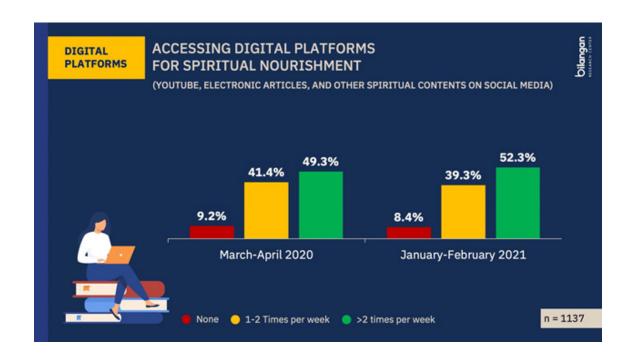
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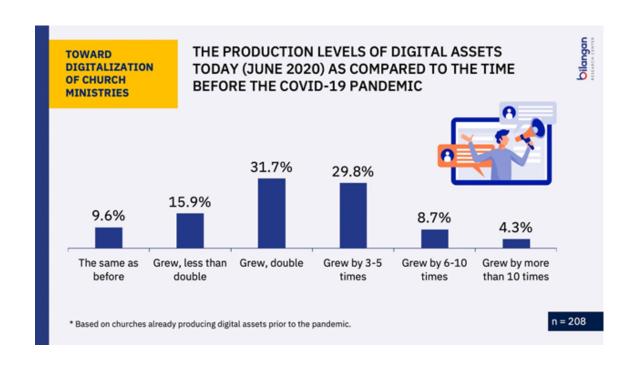
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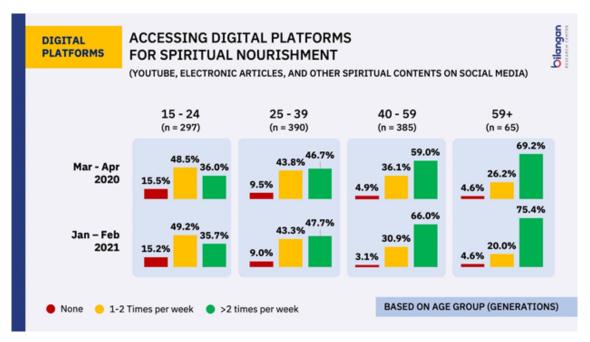
This is a surprise, considering that in the first three months of COVID-19, 74.5 percent of urban churches in Indonesia had at least doubled the production of their digital assets (BRC, June 2020).





A breakdown of the analysis by age group revealed that the change in accessing digital platforms for spiritual growth was not equally distributed. At the beginning of the pandemic in March-April 2020, church members age 60 and above were almost twice as likely to be actively accessing digital assets as the 15–24 age group, by 69.2 to 36.0 percent. Ten months later, in January-February 2021, the gap was even greater, with an increase of 6.2 percent among the older generation and a slight decline among the younger generation.

Similarly, at the beginning of the pandemic Christians who claimed to have an intimate relationship with God were more than twice as likely to be actively accessing digital assets as those who claimed to feel distanced from God (59.0 percent versus 24.1 percent). Ten months later, this gap had widened as well, with an increase of 4.6 percent among those who claimed intimacy with God and a 42.8 percent decrease among those who felt distanced from God.



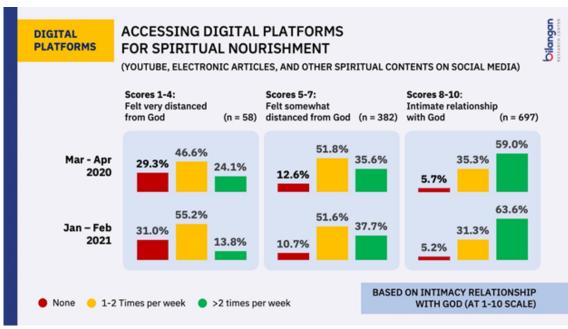
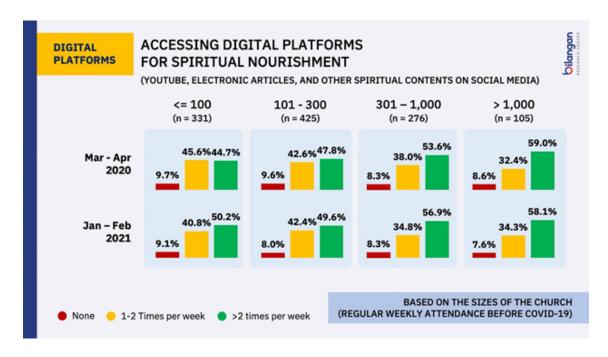


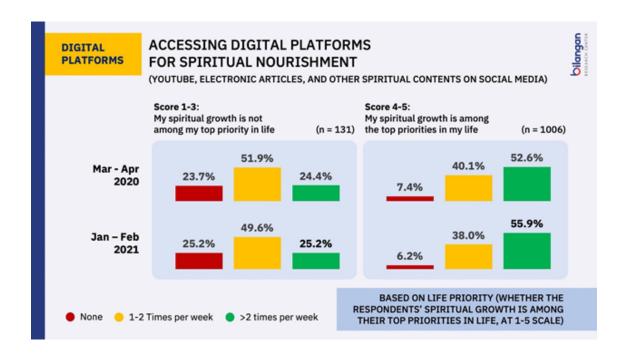


Photo by NATHAN MULLET on Unsplash

In terms of church sizes, the research found that 10 months into the pandemic, Christians who worshipped in smaller churches (100 weekly attenders or fewer) registered the highest increase in actively accessing digital platforms for spiritual nourishment (5.5 percent).



We classified those respondents who maintained that their spiritual growth was among their top priorities in life as "spiritually mature." Presumably, they would tend, more than others, to proactively seek ways to maintain their spiritual growth. This study indicated that 10 months into the pandemic, the number of spiritually mature believers who actively accessed digital platforms for their spiritual growth had increased by 3.3 percent. Overall, they were more than twice as likely to do so as Christians who did not place spiritual growth among their top priorities.



SUMMARY

- There seems to have been a huge gap between the significant increase in the investment and production of digital assets and their utilization. Perhaps the content and presentation of these digital assets was unintentionally targeted toward older generations.
- The lower percentage of younger church members actively accessing digital platforms for their spiritual growth begs a question for further research. Was this result due to the perceived relevance of the content, or were younger generations seeking their spiritual nourishment through other means or platforms?
- As expected, spiritually more mature and healthier Christians were proactively accessing digital platforms for their spiritual growth at a much higher rate.
- This research has validated the concerns expressed by many pastors with regard to the adequacy of spiritual nourishment their church members were receiving during the pandemic. Most of those who are spiritually less mature and less healthy (as indicated by feeling distanced from God) did not actively access digital platforms for their spiritual growth. Thus, their spiritual strength appears to have declined further during the pandemic.

Churches Adapting to the Digital Age





Rev. Thanon Chanchitsopon (Thailand) Executive Director, Digital and Media Commission Asia Evangelical Alliance

We are in an era of fast-paced technological advancements, the Internet, and a prolonged pandemic spread of the Coronavirus disease (COVID19). We are no longer able to carry out regular ministries which in turn has expedited our church to adapt to comply with the new regulations.

Caroline Schoeder once said,
"Some people change
when they see the light...
others change when
they feel the heat."

Change happens either when one "has an open-mindedness to change" or "is obligated to change". Given the current situation, many churches have made new adjustments and members of the church

have accepted the need to change. This is a great opportunity for the church to explore new ideas for the times ahead. I have heard some church leaders asking, "When will the pandemic situation be resolved? So, we can resume our regular congregations." As much as I would like to resume the regular congregations; but this question may fail us from learning and adapting to this crisis for future ministries in the post-pandemic world.



Photo by Diego PH on Unsplash

Many People Seek God on the Internet

In Thailand where I live, despite being a developing country; 52 out of 67 million Thais have access to the Internet with an average internet usage of 9 hours per day. This makes the Internet a very interesting area for the ministries. If Apostle Paul and Peter were to be alive in this day, they must have been keen on spreading their teachings and encouragements to believers in a much faster and wider manner than the only invention back in their days where only letter writing existed.

Three of the most prominent online evangelical organizations: GMO, BGEA, and Cru pointed out in the same direction that ever since the spread of the COVID19 pandemic, more people are searching online about getting to know God. GMO stated, "since the mid to late March 2020, more people have clicked on advertisements related to:

HOPE increased by 170%

FEAR increased by 57%

ANXIETY increased by 39%



Photo by Jonas Leupe on Unsplash

During the pandemic, there was a 16% surge in the number of people hearing the Gospel than on an average month; therefore, this is an indicator that people are more open-minded in seeking answers to their questions.

Churches Adaptive Trends in the Digital Age

Jesus uses an analogy of new wine that it should never be put in an old wineskin as the old wineskins will be torn. This implies that if the environment and society have changed but the church does not change the way we serve; we may struggle. For this reason, I would like to introduce some adaptive approaches to the current happenings.

 The online channel has become many people's "first gateway" to church

In this day, people would read other consumers' reviews or research before deciding to purchase. Online content, product reviews, and online services have become the first gateway and a journey to many people's decision-making. People will also behave in the same manner before deciding to accept Jesus or

joins church community. The church's website, online congregations, and church's social media have become the first gateway to those interested in joining the church, so it is critical for the church to have an online identity.

People will first determine the church based on their online hosting arrangements. A lack of online presence, poor management of online space, or not updating the social media will have a negative impression of the church. Other than keeping good maintenance of the church's building; the church should also invest in developing and allocating people to manage their online presence.

People will first determine the church based on their online hosting arrangements.



Photo by Chris Montgomery on Unsplash

2. The online channel has become an important "space for ministries"

Although COVID19 has led many churches to stream their weekly worship services online, some have adopted the online change even more extensively, for instance:

- Portraying the church's good image to non-Christians
- **Evangelization**
- Discipleship
- Building strong relationships within the Christian community

Many people want to study the Bible but adding an extra day in their already busy schedule to commute to church would have restricted many from studying. As a result, Bible study groups can be converted to an online platform and church members can choose to study at their own pace and availability. Eventually, the church will adjust its measuring metrics from physical attendance per program to the number of reaches in a wider variety of channels. Some programs may be terminated, and some new ones may arise; thus, the programs will be a hybrid of on-site and online gatherings.



Photo by Jonas Leupe on Unsplash

3. The language and church's operations will be adjusted for **ease of access**

While many church leaders may have some concerns regarding the understanding of new technology and online platforms; the truth is new technology is not difficult to navigate, platforms are developed to be more user-friendly, and tools like video cameras are of higher quality at a more affordable price. On the other hand, another important challenge for the church is to create contents that are understandable and relevant to the audience. The church's online presence

enables Biblical content to effortlessly be shared to other platforms, which makes it easier for non-Christians to come across what is being practiced taught at church. For this reason, the church has to adjust its activities and teachings for ease of access to non-Christians. We should examine the "map of the heart" to understand the hearts and interests of people in today's society, along with creating teaching content that would come to fruition in their hearts.

GOOD CONTENTS

for people today are as follows:

- Ease of understanding
- Precisely targeted
- Relatability

- Compelling, evolving, and engaging
- Making an impact on the audience

4. On-site gatherings emphasize **building relationships and community**

In the necessity of social distancing, we have discovered that online meetings are incapable of completely replacing face-to-face meetings. Fellowship is essential for spiritual growth and the online ministries help to strengthen rather than undermine other offline ministries, so the church simply has to figure out a way to create more meaningful fellowships. Everyone can watch worship services from any church or listen to renowned pastors delivering sermons online, but people will still be attached to a church that they can call "family". The church, therefore, should focus on being a family rather than a classroom; building strong relationships rather than gatherings. People need meaningful relationships and connections; technological advancements and the online world served as a signboard directing the

church to go back to the core foundation of being a community. This is an exciting time for us to together write the next page of the church history. I truly believe that powerful content is the love of God and the word of truth, which will be the answer for all seekers. Adapting to the digital age is a crucial springboard that jumpstarts the expansion of God's Kingdom. I would like to end this article with Socrates, an ancient Greek philosopher who quoted,

"the secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."



Photo by Paul Skorupskas on Unsplash

Is God Against A Data Driven Church?





Sitthavee Teerakulchon (Thailand)Asia Director of FaithTech

Data-driven decision making has become a common practice in the business world, but church leaders don't seem to talk much about it.

Why is that?

Think about the last time a decision was made in your church. How was it done? In my experience with Asian churches and ministries, we, most of the time, make a decision based on what feels right. I hear things like:

How do we attract young people to church?

"Adopt a contemporary worship style and hire a youth pastor."

Where will our next campus be?

"God gave me a vision last night that we must go to..."

Rarely do I hear people in ministry asking for quantitative research or checking their database.

We tend to distrust data and rely more on abstract things such as emotions, prophetic voices, visions, etc.

This is not necessarily wrong.

Many times, God calls his people to do something beyond rational explanation (from a data -scientist perspective).

For example, in John 6, Jesus asked Philip to feed the five thousand, and Philip replied that he would need more than half a year's wages to do that. Philip used good data-driven logic, but then, using a young boy's 5 loaves and 2 fishes, Jesus fed them all.

I'm not against the things I mentioned above, but I want to propose that it's not always the best thing to do.

Because sometimes

God encourages his people to make a decision on data.

The Bible is full of miracles like feeding the 5,000, but it's also full of data-driven decisions too.

Consider this example in the book of Numbers. God orders Moses to create and collect a database of Israelite (Numbers 1 and 26) and to see who is able to serve in the army (Numbers 26:2).

Or another example: Jesus invites the crowd to consciously estimate the cost before building a tower. He wants them to calculate the cost of being a disciple before following him. These are data-based decisions.

So, what's the best model then?

I suggest church leaders should be "Data-informed, faith-driven." Rather than being data-driven, this means you know the importance of having data and using it for information, but not be driven by it.

"PwC research shows that we make a decision 3 times better with data."

So, what does "data-informed, faith-driven" look like?

Before you start a new campus, you intensely pray, but also undertake the market research in that area. You evangelize to people boldly with a faithful heart but also have in your mind the demographic factors of successful converts.

But remember, God's voice is always bigger than the data. With faith, God can do more than what we see in the data (that's the definition of faith in Hebrew 11:1). Keep being faith-driven!

What next?

Ask yourself, "How can we be more data-informed?"

Creating a data-informed culture will require creativity. When people make a decision, you can start by asking, "What numbers are you using?" "Have you checked any market research?" "Can you take a look at the relevant data before going further?"

We should do our homework and have the metrics before we decide. Not because data has the final say, but because it will tell us when our decision requires faith!

If we don't have the data, we won't know how hard we need to work. Or how hard we need to pray!

After asking questions like this, you might realize that you need to collect more data (e.g.,how many people come to church/life group each week, demographics of a new believer, how people first found your church, etc.).

God is not against data-based decisions. Rather, he wants us to be

data-informed and faith-driven.

When we are, we will find that data doesn't diminish our faith. It fuels our faith. ■

AEA Digital and Media Commission



Rev. Ezekiel Tan CHAIRMAN



Rev. Thanon Chanchitsopon EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Phelip Sarker
BANGLADESH



Sitthavee Teerakulchon THAILAND



Rudra Dev BK NEPAL



Buntha Ly CAMBODIA



Wendy Phodiansa INDONESIA

Challenging times and huge opportunities open up.

The world today is undergoing rapid changes due to technological advances. One aspect that has a broad impact on people is the "Internet". The internet has changed the mindset of many people and affected the way of life especially in the past 2 years when there has been an epidemic of Covid 19. Many churches need to change the way they minister from the traditional way. They are unable to organize a regular crowded worship service. Online worship has become the new normal. Many churches are not yet ready for this new normal, they found it difficult to develop as they don't have the know-how and lack of personnel in this area.

However, they automatically begin to familiarize themselves with digital work due to the coercive situation. On the other side, many churchestake advantage of this season to transform themselves.

They are fully committed to their digital mission and are supported by members who see this opportunity as well.

Vision and Strategy



For this reason, Asia Evangelical Alliance begins to set up the Digital and Media Commission to help promote churches in member countries to grow up in this mission.

By 2030, AEA Digital and Media Commission looks forward to being recognized as the most strategic platform for Collaboration among National Evangelical Alliances and Regional Ministry Networks. We would like to promote and nurture networks and collaborations among Evangelicals in Asia for the purpose of strengthening and expanding the Kingdom of God in Asia and beyond.

To accomplish this goal, we will focus on cooperation and collaboration between our Strategic partners and AEA members.

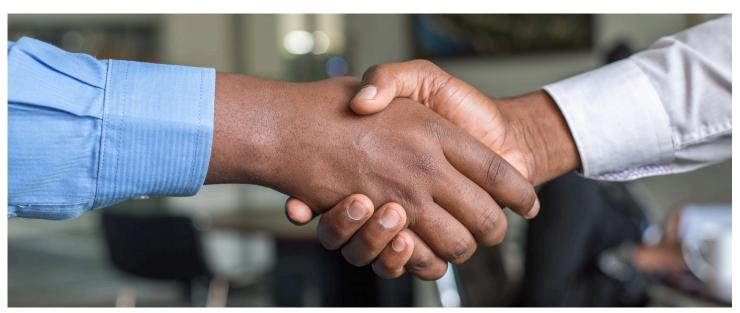


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PARTNER WITH KEY ORGANIZATIONS

Many organizations have resources, know how, including expertise relating to digital and media mission. Therefore, we aim to open space for working with these organizations in order to achieve mutual success for all parties.



3

SHARE RESOURCES & INNOVATIONS

There is one important keyword in the digital world, which is "collaboration". In a world where technology has been rapidly advancing and found an easy way to disseminate, we do not need to develop all resources or platforms by ourselves. The network being created will make an easy path for us to share resources and build innovation in the Body of Christ as a whole.



2

BUILD NETWORK

We aim to create a network of people who work in the area of digital and media in various churches in order to help them learn from each other's experiences, reinforce encouragement among them, and open space for a wide distribution of resources.



4

DEVELOP AEA ONLINE PLATFORMS

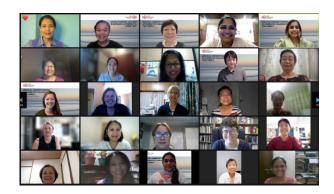
For AEA to become a strategic platform for collaboration among National Evangelical Alliances, we aim to develop AEA's online platform to be more accessible to member countries. It consists of useful content and media from AEA and partner organizations for publishing.

A REPORT from Women Commission





Aashima Samuel
AEA Women Commission member



Globally, an estimated 736 million women, almost 1 in 3 have been subjected to domestic abuse. Seeing this growing concern, the Asia Evangelical Alliance (AEA) Women Commission hosted a webinar on "Biblical Understanding of Domestic Violence in the Family" on September 3, 2021. About 350 participants from 34 nations came together for the event where we shared and encouraged the equality of women through the word of God.

Ms. Amanda Jackson, Executive Director, WEA

Women Commission, spoke on the Biblical Perspective on Domestic Violence. She shared that God established men and women as equal, right from the start in the Old Testament, and that 'we are all equal in Christ'. She further shared that mutual submission between men and women is the key and encouraged the church to protect the weakest and most vulnerable just as God said in the Book of Isaiah.

Ms. Grace Hee,

AEA Women Commission Executive Director,

opened the webinar and shared how Domestic Violence is rapidly increasing, especially in pandemic times, due to increased stress precipitated by the loss of income and isolation. She stressed the importance of coming together as a church and having a collaborative concerned response towards the suffering.

Ms. Aashima Samuel

from India

introduced Domestic Violence and its different forms. She shared that the roots of domestic violence lie in the cultural norms of the family and the society. Based on the Biblical teaching Proverbs 31:8-9, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, and defend the rights of the needy," and not allow the voices to go unheard in the so-called culture of silence and highlight the hidden bruises as God desires.

Emma Scott

from Restored UK,

spoke on identifying signs of domestic abuse in a victim – the psychological, emotional, physical, sexual, economic and spiritual signs and its response. She used real life stories of victims to bring light on domestic abuse and highlighted that the abusive behaviors in Christian families are often justified using the Bible and Church doctrine, and therefore, churches should bring awareness, provide support and protection to tackle domestic abuse.

Rev. Martha Das

from Bangladesh

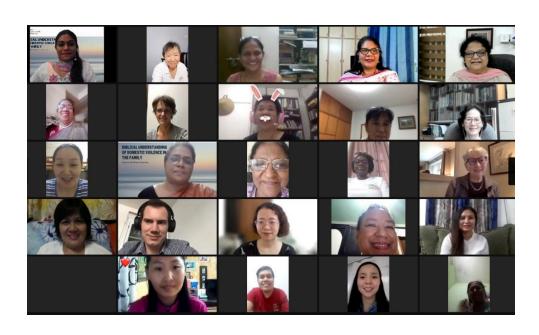
spoke on the Impact of Domestic Violence on Churches where she highlighted the lack of awareness of domestic abuse in churches.

She emphasized that a church is a place where the broken and insecure can feel safe and find healing, and urged the churches to give consistent messages on domestic violence and encourage each other through regular prayer support.

There was also a heart touching session where Sis. Ruby John and Sis. Amal from Pakistan, and Sis. Mahoko from Japan shared stories of grief, suffering and abandonment of women facing domestic violence and abuse.

During the breakout room session, the participants had the opportunity to share their stories with each other and discussed the need to start awareness and create a culture to train boys to have mutual respect.

In the end, we closed the webinar with a precious time of praying for one another. In a first ever initiative in Asia, we praise the Lord and are grateful to Rev. Bambang, General Secretary of AEA, for agreeing to act on a recommendation from the webinar, which is to conduct a Domestic Abuse research among the churches of Asia. To God be the Glory



A REPORT from Youth Commission: Intergenerational Leadership











On 18 September 2021, the Youth Commission (YC) of both the Asia Evangelical Alliance (AEA) and the Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI), organized a much-needed and relevant webinar on "Intergenerational Leadership." There were 251 participants from 21 countries registered to attend this highly anticipated webinar.

The joint planning team was glad to have Dr. Bambang Budijanto, the General Secretary of AEA and Rev. Vijayesh Lal, the General Secretary of EFI, as the two main speakers. With inspiration, they shared not only their wisdom on why intergenerational leadership matters, biblically and conceptually, but also how well they have been navigating this tricky terrain practically in their ministry and leader-

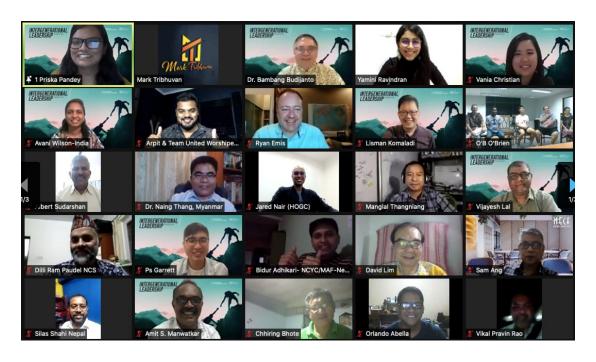
ship. With similar richness and insights, two younger leaders, Yamini Ravindran, the Associate Secretary General of National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka and Pastor Garrett Lee, the CEO of Heart God Church Singapore, provided their responses and stories to echo the inevitable necessity and amazing blessings of the presence of intergenerational leadership, particularly in their contexts.



The final section of the webinar was filled with delightful and honest conversations among the above speakers answering participants' questions about their presentations. Some of the issues that were discussed were:

- How to practically prepare the leadership platform in order to pass the baton from senior leaders to emerging/younger leaders.
- How could we bridge the gap between the beautiful idea of intergenerational leadership and its practice in reality.
- What are some of the "beneath the surface" issues, that can be found in any church or Christian organization, that need to addressed to have a meaningful, inclusive, and effective execution of intergenerational leadership.

Moving forward, not only the speakers, but also many webinar participants, think that while the discussion on intergenerational leadership in this webinar is certainly a good start, it should lead to many more ongoing conversations and dialogues among leaders from different generations. It is hoped that eventually, the presence of intergenerational leadership in churches and Christian organizations will no longer be merely an idea or exception, but a norm and prolific way to go.



Mission Commission Report



Rev. Barnabas MoonExecutive Director,
Mission Commission
Asia Evangelical Alliance

The AEA Missions Commission worked closely with the AWMJ (Antioch World Mission Journey) to host the 200 Nations Leaders' Missions Congress. It was held online for a total of 3 days (Novermber 2-4, 2021) and 7,839 people from 158 countries participated.

AEA Mission Commission's role at the "200 NLM Congress I" is primarily to assist the Conference Secretariat in South Korea.

This includes overall planning and design of the Conference, ranging from content to identifying specific topics, recommending speakers, and program coordination.

Through this Congress, the AWMJ and AEA Mission Commission hope to restore and strengthen the essence of the Church in Asia and beyond (globally).



Announcement from Children Commission

Bring Online Learning Alive!

This training is organised by GoPlay, an international coalition that draws practitioners from all over the world to share expertise and resources to reach the children.

Date Nov 13, 2021 Time 7am (NY Time)

Visit:

https://asiaevangelicals.org/children/ to register for Zoom link ALL ARE WELCOME! **Note:**

if you cannot attend this meeting, recording will be available in our resources page.

FREE RESOURCES on Media & Technology:

'Online Training Solutions', 'Media Creativity' are just some of the free resources available for you and your church to access for free. Be equipped to disciple and do outreach through the online platform.

Visit:

https://asiaevangelicals.org/children/today!

PRAYER:

Please pray for the children in Asia especially the vulnerable and those at risk especially because of the recent Covid outbreaks. Pray also for the Children Commission and our work to connect and serve the Church and families in Asia. We have a burden to see the Church equipping families to disciple their children and are planning a Family conference with the Women Commission in 2022.





Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen. – Ephesians 3:20-21 (NLT)

HAVC A BLCSSCD CHRISTMAS 2021 May your Christmas sparkle w

May your Christmas sparkle with moments of love, laughter and goodwill, and may the year ahead be full of contentment and joy.

Peace and blessings, AEA EXCO

Mr. Godrey Yogarajah Bambang Budijanto, Ph.D. Rev. Hisao James Tanabe Rev. Dr. Manoch Jangmook Ms. Bolortuya Damdinjav Rev. Jung Kook Han Mrs. May Pan Lynn Rev. Vijayesh Lal

Rev. Ezekiel Tan

AEA Recommended New Book

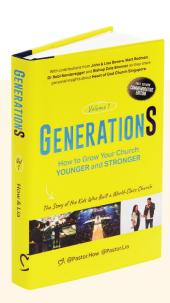


"If you're looking to strengthen your church's next generation discipleship strategy, I highly recommend you check out this book" - Rob Hoskins

GENERATIONS

Volume 1: How to Grow Your Church YOUNGER and STRONGER

The Story of the Kids Who Built a World-Class Church



This is the story of the kids who built a world-class church — Heart of God Church started as a divine experiment to build a prototype Youth Church. Now it has developed into a proof of concept that Youths can build a STRONG CHURCH.

GenerationS is a mindset-shifting, heart-changing book that shows you how to raise up generations of young people in your church to build His kingdom.

AEA Exclusive Price (https://generationsmvmt.com/vol1/)

All royalties and proceeds will go towards advancing the cause of GenerationS.

Key in voucher code "AEANOV" to enjoy additional 10% off.





About the Authors

Pastor How (Tan Seow How) and his wife Pastor Lia (Cecilia Chan) are co-founders, co-senior pastors of Heart of God Church (HOGC) Singapore and co-authors. A lot of 'co-this' and 'co-that' because they are like Siamese twins who even co-share the same office space. They share the same love for sports and steaks. The only thing they don't share is coffee as she needs a full cup every morning.

Lia is a former journalist, preacher, cancer survivor, worship team builder, trainer and CEO (Chief Entertainment Officer). This serial discipler has been raising young leaders for more than 20 years. Her life verse is Isaiah 58:12 - "... You shall raise up the foundations of many GenerationS..."

How is the visionary, leadership, strategy and organisation guy. His passion and burden is to see Strong GenerationS Churches built, worthy of God's glory. He is also a businessman and funder but what matters most to him is being a godly father to GenerationS of young pastors and leaders!

They are Gen Xers who raised Millennial leaders to grow Gen Z leaders to reach Gen Alphas.

Pastor How and Pastor Lia of the HOG church are AEA partner in walking along side young generation to fulfill their calling in Asia and beyond.



Location:

54 Ramkanghaeng Rd, Soi 22, Huamark, Bangkok 10240

Website:

www.asiaea.org

E-Mail:

info@asiaea.org

PayPal

E-Mail: finance@asiaea.org

Link:

www.paypal.me/AsiaEvangelical

QR Code:



Bank:

TMBTThanachart Bank Public Company Limited 3000 Phahon Yothin RD., Chompon, Chatuchak, Bangkok 10900 Thailand

Swiftcode:

TMBKTHBK

Beneficiary:

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