

ZION – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES ON BECOMING A MID-SIZED CHURCH

ELDER BOARD

We thank Zion Newsletter for providing us the opportunity to share some of our discussion regarding the future of Zion. As we emerge from the pandemic, from online worship back to in-person worship, as we move from 1 worship session to 2 worship sessions, and in addition to other ministry (Yonge and Finch) we now have approximately 300 people that worships at Zion.

In January, the Elders board invited Dr. Wong to host a workshop for the pastoral staff and elders. The theme is Exact Measurements, Doubles Effectiveness – The Challenges and Opportunities of Becoming a Mid-sized Church.

Dr. Wong has pastored multiple churches in Edmonton, Vancouver and Calgary. His thesis is related to church management. The Elders' board did not want to waste this opportunity and invited him to share with us. From his sharing, there are a few points for us to reflect upon.

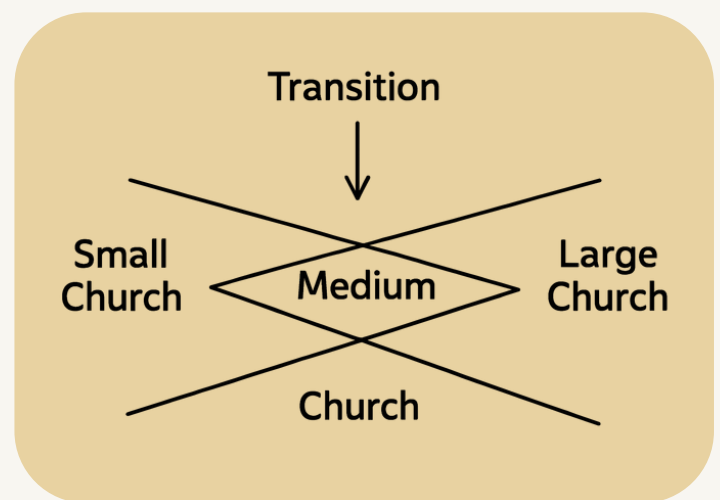
Core Value

Small church focuses on relationship, and pastors are like families of the congregation. They are always willing to help and care for the congregation. Congregations are also like family to one another, everything can be worked out, and they always watch out for each other.

However, mid-sized church focuses more on management. Pastors are becoming more of an administrator, and are busy with ministry work. As numbers grow, a more complex structure is required. There will be more opinions, and problems may not be fixed with just a few words.

The workshop spoke of something very unique, that people who joined Zion at different times will have different expectations. Therefore, these different expectations will create tension within the church. For those who joined when Zion was a small church, they tend to value the church as a family. They prefer all members doing things together, joining love feast together, going to retreat together, and going on church field trip together. Whereas, for those who joined when Zion is a mid-sized church, due to the amount of people, they would prefer to do things with a group of brothers and sisters they are more familiar with. When joining activities, they would prefer to go with brothers and sisters they are more familiar with, and they will have more demands for the church, hoping that there's a better structure and culture.

What the Elders's board needed to do is to find balance between the two value systems, allowing the family relationship to sustain while improving our management structure. This is not an administrative task, but a spiritual and pastoral direction.



Evolving of the Pastoral Team and Church Leaders

In a small church, pastors are like elders in a family who care for every little details of members. Everyone is familiar with each other and decision are usually in a relax and trusting environment. It's like a family sitting in a circle talking. Emergence of leaders is based on who want to serve and not much is focused on the ability. The most important thing for everyone is to be seen and cherished.

As the church progress into a mid-sized church, the senior pastor can no longer do everything himself. More participation and responsibilities are needed from the pastoral team and lay leaders. Decisions are usually made by a committee and through group discussions. This allows ministry to be more diverse, but will also require better communication. Therefore, the church must spend time to train leaders, and have member serve based on their gift in order to facilitate a healthier environment.

If the church is to grow in to a large church, the senior pastor will become more like a coach to a team, with the focus being vision and direction. The pastoral team will focus on particular ministry and vision of that ministry. Ministry leaders will be responsible for the daily activities. With the current way Zion is running, the Elders' board will need to have wisdom, to find a balance in structure, relationship and pastoral care.

Outlook on Zion's Future

Looking into the future, there are still some important lessons we will need to learn, discuss and plan together. First the method of communication, as the number of people and the amount of ministry increases, we need a better, a more transparent, and respectful method of communication. This will allow different brothers and sisters at different positions to better understand the need of others.

Next, we hope to purposely develop potential leaders. It's not just about inviting them to serve, but to walk with them and assisting them in finding and using their spiritual gifts. When we are willing to learn and adjust, God will make Zion more mature church in the process.

At the same time, we need to learn to manage our expectations and understand that, while God's grace is sufficient, the church has limited resources and abilities. We need to find balance between faith and reality.

Lastly, as different ministries grow, we need better coordination and cooperation between departments. This is to avoid each one doing their own work, which will allow us to support each other and walk together. May we during our discussions, we will always base our them in love, and to create a united and loving church with Christ being the head.

The Elders' board believe that God is leading Zion into a new stage. This is a time where challenges and opportunities co-exist. May we continue to pray and reflect together, actively participate and be a testament of the work of God. We welcome everyone to share their opinions and build up the church together.