English Ministry Models in Korean American Immigrant Churches

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at Wesley Theological Seminary

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There has been a silent exodus of 1.5 and 2nd generation Korean-Americans from the church. They leave when they reach college age and never return to church of any denomination. Some believe that the numbers are as high as 90%.

When these numbers are thrown out to the 1.5 and 2nd generation Korean-Americans attending the church, the first question becomes why. Why are they leaving? The first answer seems to be the language has been a barrier. If that is true, then what is our church doing to provide English Ministries for the 1.5 and 2nd generation? This prompted us to look at the United States and see what United Methodist Church ministries exist for the English speaking Korean-American generations.

We started this process by looking at the year 2000 census. We looked for the count on Korean-Americans. Though there may be under representation in number because of lack of participation in the census that would occur across the board in every city. Therefore, we took the numbers as they were and looked for the cities with the highest number of Korean-Americans. Once that data was obtained, we started calling different UMC agencies and boards to see if there were any studies that had been conducted in order to track the number of EMs in the United States. Unfortunately, that data had never been collected.

Therefore, we started a simple process of calling and asking people within those cities to find the information we sought. All the people had association within the UMCs in those cities and could find the information out within a few days. In addition to those phone calls, we also solicited information from the Mission Superintendents of the Jurisdictions. They were able to provide information that verified the phone calls.

From that process, the following chart was developed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>EMs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>257,975</td>
<td>7 (+1 developing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>170,509</td>
<td>3 (New Jersey 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>74,454</td>
<td>3 (Virginia 2)(Maryland 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>57,386</td>
<td>1 (+1 developing)(Oakland 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>46,258</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>41,469</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>29,279</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>22,317</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honolulu</td>
<td>21,681</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>18,123</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>16,737</td>
<td>3 (+1 developing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detroit/Ann Arbor</td>
<td>12,877</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>12,004</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>11,290</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>10,921</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>10,341</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>10,097</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MINISTRY MODEL: MINISTRY WITHIN A CHURCH

It is in this context that an English Ministry serves as a ministry to a particular segment of the congregation’s population. This EM is dependent upon the first generation church for funding, facilities, and other support. This model of ministry could evolve and become more autonomous and perhaps become a “church alongside a church.” This ministry functions as a ministry department similar to the children’s and youth ministries.

Who initiates?: This ministry can be initiated by the parent first generation congregation as it recognizes the spiritual needs of the English speaking young adult members of the church. These young adults members may have grown up in the church and been participants in the children and youth ministries. In an effort to meet these individuals’ needs and to allow the first generation church to be home to them, an English Ministry is developed. These young adults may also recognize the need for this ministry as they may have outgrown the English speaking youth ministry they would have been a part of as junior and senior high school students.

Target group: Initially, the target group is the English speaking young adult members of the church. In addition to ministering to the English speaking young adults of the church, there may also be an effort to reach out to other English speaking youth in the area as well as college students from local schools.

Vision/Purpose: This ministry would serve to meet the spiritual needs of the English speaking young adults in the church. This ministry would also be a spiritual home for individuals and provide a place of community with other English speaking Korean Americans. Individuals may also find this ministry to be a place where they can grow in the faith. This ministry also has the distinct purpose of spiritually feeding children’s ministry and youth ministry teachers. Oftentimes, English speaking young adults serve the first generation church as teachers. English ministries can serve these individuals through nurture and the provision of Bible study, fellowship activities, service opportunities, and worship services. The vision of such a ministry could be to become more autonomous and to grow in number and in faith.

Funding: The funding for such a ministry can be the parent first generation congregation. Offerings from this ministry can be allocated partially to the first generation congregation as well as partially maintained by the English ministry to utilize at their own discretion.

Staff: A part time pastor or part time seminarian could serve this ministry. The parent first generation church could share with members of the English ministry congregation the task of identifying and hiring candidates for such a position. A part time pastor of this congregation may find the need to become full time or to find a full time person for this ministry. This would come at a time when the congregation’s needs are expanding.

Location: This ministry will most likely be housed in the building where the first generation congregation, as well as the other ministries, are meeting. If this English
ministry should grow to become more independent, issues of meeting space, worship times could emerge.

**Typical timeline of planting to development stage:** As long as issues of funding and facility use are determined, and a population of English speaking young adults exists, an English ministry based upon this model could begin with the identification and hiring of at least a part time pastor or seminarian. A first generation congregation needs to be actively engaged in conversation concerning the expansion of such a model of ministry to a ministry that is more independent and more willing become more committed and autonomous. This particular model of English ministry could easily become more independent with the commitment of a core group of active lay leaders. This group of laity is almost more imperative than the full time staff person.

**Relationship with the Korean ministry:** As this ministry models seeks more independence and autonomy, the relationship with the Korean ministry can become strained. This would be the case if the vision of the growing English ministry were at odds with the vision of the Korean ministry. A positive and healthier relationship between the English ministry and the Korean ministry is contingent upon each ministry’s willingness to respect the other. It may be necessary for the Korean ministry to “let go” of whatever hold (financial, emotional, control) it has on the English ministry.

**Assessment:**
This type of model is effective in situations where a limited pool of English speaking Korean Americans is available. This model will help the first generation to maintain and nurture its supply of English speaking Sunday school teachers and youth counselors while expanding its ministry to become intergenerational and bi-lingual.

Also, this model is often utilized to initiate an English Ministry by the first generation church with limited financial resources. However, if the church is located in a metropolitan area with a significant population of English speaking Korean Americans, this model will face limitation in its growth as the membership increases. With the increase in membership, the needs of the English Ministry can potentially create tension over issues such as space, worship time, finances, and hiring/supervision of staff. In addition, as the ministry attracts more members without ties to the first generation church, the English Ministry can face tension within itself as to their relationship with the Korean Ministry.

An example of this model existed at Asbury United Methodist Church for approximately 6 years. The English Ministry was created by the parent congregation as it witnessed a need for a ministry that would specifically be geared towards English speaking young adults who had grown up in the church. A unique aspect of this ministry was the large number of returning individuals to this church that was familiar to them since their younger years. A number of these returning young adults served as the core group of members who provided leadership for the congregation with the pastor. The EM emerged without a seminary trained pastor and was started with the leadership of an active layperson. Approximately a year after its inception, a seminary trained pastor was found and she served for 4-5 years on a part time basis. The EM eventually grew to a
point where it became evident that more could be possible. However, the search for a full
time pastor ended in vain. It was imperative that this EM find a full time pastor as the
church was in a critical juncture. An EM that is 6 years old is relatively young and this
EM needed a full time pastor to realize the potential that was evident in the congregation.
The EM was ready to launch and to be more intentional about being autonomous. This
EM closed its doors in the midst of disappointment and sorrow experienced by both the
EM and KM congregations. There is still hope that the EM can re-open its doors once a
pastor can be found. The encouragement lies in the fact that the KM values the existence
of the EM.
MINISTRY MODEL: INDEPENDENT CHURCH PLANT MODEL

Who Initiates: An independent church plant is initiated out of a need that either the jurisdictional or the annual conference leadership has identified. This can be done in a cooperative manner with the support of other UM entities such as the GBGM, Korean Mission, or the UM Council.

Target Group: The identified target group is the English speaking 1.5/2nd generation Korean and Asian Americans in their 20's and 30's both singles and married. Such target group tends to be composed of those who are professionals located in major metropolitan areas with a growing of Asian American population.

Vision/Purpose: The vision of an independent church plant is to reach out to a growing number of Korean American young adults who are not affiliated with any church. Although 70% of 1st generation Korean Americans attend church on a regular basis, more than 90% of the English speaking Korean Americans do not attend church after graduating from college. In addition, many smaller Korean-speaking churches are not equipped to effectively minister to these individuals. Hence, the vision of such a church plant is to create a culturally relative church that will meet the spiritual needs of English speaking Korean Americans. In addition, the hope of such a ministry is to garner the support of the local Korean speaking churches so that it can fill the need of many churches without its own English Ministry.

Funding: Because this type of model is usually initiated by the annual or jurisdictional conference leadership, most of the funding will be provided by the Annual and/or Jurisdictional Conference with the additional support from other individual donors, local churches, and/or boards and agencies.

How staff is selected: Initially, the pastor in charge will be appointed by the cabinet of the annual conference.

Location: The annual conference leadership will work with the appointed pastor to locate a facility that is conveniently located to effectively reach out to the target group. In most cases, it will be a shared facility situation.

Structure, programs: From the beginning, this church model will have its own committees that follow the basic guidelines of the Book of Discipline. The church will be independent and autonomous in administration, finances, and staff-related issues.

Typical Timeline of Development: This type of model requires at least 4 to 8 months of preparation in securing funds, selecting a pastor, and finding a location. Once the pastor is appointed with proper funding secured, the pastor will be given additional time of 3 to 9 months to form a core group and to hold its launching service. Thereafter, the growth rate of the church will depend on various factors.
**Relationship with Korean Ministry (if any):** This model does not have any direct relationships with a Korean ministry. However, the Korean ministry can serve as a support network and can provide potential leads for new members.

**Assessment:** This model is beneficial in that there is no potential tension with the parent church that can limit the growth of the English Ministry. The church is free to experiment and explore ministry style and programs that best suit the needs of its members. However, this model is challenged to create and develop a core group of members from scratch which can be time consuming and difficult. In addition, some of the other Korean UMCs in the area can see this church a competitive to their own English ministries and can create some unforeseen conflicts within the community. Furthermore, the pastor is largely left on his/her own to develop this ministry with high expectation to succeed in a short period of time. Hence, the pastor faces a strong potential for burnout. This model is most effective in situations with a highly motivated and experienced pastor with a clear vision for such church planting.

One good example is the new English Ministry in the greater San Jose Area. The California-Nevada Conference chose this ministry as its primary mission project of the Conference, and initiated this process in conjunction with the Western Jurisdiction Korean Mission. This new ministry was launched with the full financial support and guidance of the Annual Conference, Western Jurisdiction Korean Mission and the United Methodist Council on Korean American Ministries. We find this synergistic work of the three bodies a very ideal model in developing new ministries.
MINISTRY MODEL: MULTI-STAFF INDEPENDENT CHURCH PLANT

This is a model where an autonomous and independent English ministry (EM) is planted in an area with high potential for growth with a pastoral leadership comprised of 2 or more full-time pastors.

Who initiates: In this situation, the initial recommendation can be made by various individuals or groups such as an individual pastor with a vision for such a church plant, by first generation Korean pastors and/or churches in the area out of a desire to reach out, by a group of lay persons wanting to start a ministry, and/or by annual conference leadership. These initiators will need to work with the district and/or annual conference leadership of the area in order to secure support. Thus, the project will become a cooperative effort of multiple groups seeking to meet the mandate of making disciples of Jesus Christ by reaching out to the growing 1.5/2nd generation Korean American population.

Target group: The target group may vary slightly depending on the geographical area but it will predominantly be 1.5/2nd generation English speaking Korean Americans, both singles and families. In some instances, this target group will be determined by the core group that may have initiated this project. Furthermore, the target group may be enlarged to include Asian Americans or other ethnic groups as well.

Vision/Purpose: Although the vision and the purpose will be largely determined by the leadership team and the geographical location, the vision of such a church plant is to develop a culturally sensitive ministry reaching out to a group of individuals to whom the existing churches have not been successful in ministering.

Funding: Because this is most likely an effort supported (and/or initiated) by the annual conference leadership, a significant portion of funding will come from the annual conference. In addition, the funding should be secured from other sources such as the UM Council, GBGM, local churches and/or other entities within the United Methodist Church. It is important that the sufficient amount of funding is available for a significant period of time in order to ensure that the developing church is not hindered by the lack of finances.

Staff: As an annual conference endorsed church plant, the pastoral leadership should be appointed by the cabinet. However, it is essential that the lead pastor of such ministry be someone with a clear vision and with gifts and graces for planting a ministry. It is also essential that the lead pastor provide input and suggestion in forming his/her pastoral team in order to create an effective and productive working dynamic of the team.

Location: The annual conference leadership should work with the pastoral leadership and/or the core group to secure an appropriate facility that is conveniently accessible to the target group, adaptable to the type of worship setting desired by the ministry, available during the desirable worship time, and spacious enough to accommodate the needs of the ministry.
Typical timeline of planting to development stage: Initially, a core group will need to be gathered and formed. This core group will covenant to meet together on a regular basis to form community and to vision together. In the process, group members will invite other individuals to join, thus creating a number of small groups. This initial stage of forming small groups will last anywhere from three to eight months. During this stage, the pastoral leadership with the core group will plan a launching service where the whole community will be invited to come and participate. It will be ideal to coincide this launching service with a recognized Christian holiday such as Easter. One critical part of this timeline is in the preparation period from the initial birth to the launching service. During this preparation period, the ministry will need to form its structure/programs that will accommodate the needs of its target group. Another critical stage of this plant is the follow-up stage after the launching service. The core group must be prepared to do effective follow up in order to retain all newcomers who will be visiting. If all goes well, such a plant can become self-sufficient in about a period of 2 to 3 years.

Relationship with the KM: There is no direct relationship with the Korean Ministry. However, it will be prudent for the pastoral leadership to befriend the Korean ministries in the area in order to promote a good relationship and to promote their own ministry to the English speaking Korean Americans in their communities.

Assessment: This model as an English Ministry has not been tried in the UMC. However, there are other successful ministries using this model, most notably New Song Community Church in Irvine, CA. It appears that this model can be effective in meeting the expectation of many highly professional English speaking Korean Americans who are seeking to find a church that can provide all the necessary programs for their individual and family’s needs. Many are looking for a church that offers strong teaching, edifying fellowship, emphasis on Christian education, and dynamic worship. The only way to meet such high expectations is to develop a multi-staffed ministry from the start and to create a church that can meet both the demands and the expectations of such a group. In addition, this model is helpful to the pastors as the team can serve as a support and accountability network.

The biggest obstacle in developing a multi-staff independent church model is two-fold: funding and staffing. It will be challenging to secure enough funding for 2 or 3 pastors and it will be difficult to find the right individuals to form a team. In addition, this model of ministry can be most successful in areas with a very large number of English speaking Korean Americans and without strong competition.
MINISTRY MODEL: CHURCH WITHIN A CHURCH MODEL

Who Initiates: This model is most often initiated by the first generation church that is seeking to meet the needs of a growing number of English speaking Korean Americans in their own community. It is also developed out of a ministry within a church model as its membership increases.

Target Group: The target group is largely Korean Americans since the ministry is still identified as being a part of the Korean-speaking congregation. The ministry also attracts a number of young people of other ethnicities through relationships that they have with the Korean American members of the church.

Vision/Purpose: The vision/purpose of this model will vary depending on the demographic, geographical location, and the pastoral leadership. The overall vision of this ministry is to minister to the English speaking Korean Americans in the community so that they can grow in their relationship to God and to one another.

Funding: This model of church is financially self-sufficient and does not receive funding from any other sources. In addition, the congregation also contributes its shared portion of building maintenance to the Korean speaking congregation.

How staff selected: The English Ministry shares in the decision making process of selecting and hiring of a staff. English Ministry members are represented in the SPRC to voice their recommendations and objections to the Korean congregation.

Location, facility: The English Ministry shares its facility with the Korean-speaking congregation.

Structure, programs: The English Ministry has its own administrative council and programming committees. However, the EM also sends representatives to the Korean congregation’s SPRC, Administrative Council, and Board of Trustees to represent the interests of the EM.

Typical timeline of development: The timeline of development depends mainly upon the situation. If a stable, core group of English Ministry members had already been established at the start of the ministry, a self-sustaining ministry can be established in about 2-4 years. However, if there’s a lack of a core group, then the pastor would need to spend at least 1-3 years developing a core group of leaders. Thereafter, the ministry will need an additional 2-4 years in order to go to the next level of becoming self-sufficient.

Relationship with Korean Ministry (if any): The Korean Ministry can offer spiritual and emotional support for the English Ministry through their presence and prayer. In regards to areas of shared concerns such as education, the two ministries can collaborate in finding solutions and in partnering with one another to achieve a goal. However, a potential conflict does exist as in any other
shared facility situation. There can be a conflict over issues of worship time, space usage, and shared financial responsibility. It is important that the KM recognize the EM congregation as a church and not a “sub-ministr[ies].”

**Assessment:**
This ministry model is effectively working in San Diego. The EM has reached financial independence but chooses to maintain its identity with the Korean congregation. Such model offers benefits to both the Korean and the English congregation as resources can be shared and diverse perspectives are embraced. This type of model would be most effective in situations where there is potential for the EM to grow to a significant size in order to obtain such partnership in relationship. In addition, the Korean congregation must have the vision that clearly sees the EM as a unique church to which they can provide initial support to help it reach its full potential.
**MINISTRY MODEL: CHURCH ALONGSIDE THE CHURCH**

This is a model where an autonomous English ministry (EM) exists side-by-side to a Korean language ministry (KM). In most cases, the EM was developed and initiated by the KM to meet the needs of the increasing number of the English speaking next generation members.

**Who initiates:** In most cases, the leaders of the Korean Ministry initiated the development of an English Ministry as a ministry within the Korean language church. Recently, some churches are developing autonomous EMs from the start. Although the KM may initially help recruit pastoral leadership and assist with the budget, the vision is to develop an autonomous independent English ministry.

**Target group:** Many of the EM members will be the children of the KM members. However, the target group is widened to include all 1.5/2nd generation Korean and Asian Americans in the surrounding area.

**Vision/Purpose:** Initial vision was to provide a ministry to reach out to the English speaking constituents. As the ministry develops and becomes independent, the vision of the church is shaped and determined by the core leaders of the church. In the case of the Ascension Ministry of Los Angeles Korean UMC, their vision is to continue to provide a viable ministry to the Korean Americans in the greater Los Angeles area. In the case of the Glendale Community Church, their vision is to become a multi-ethnic ministry in their community.

**Funding:** Usually, the initial funding is provided by the Korean Ministry that is initiating the project. At times, the KM will work with the District or the Annual Conference to secure additional funding. As the ministry grows, the ministry becomes self-sufficient.

**How staff selected:** Initially, the KM and a few leaders of the EM will be involved in the search process. As the ministry becomes independent, the EM will have its own SPRC to oversee the search process. In the case of the Ascension Ministry, the senior pastor is appointed by the Annual Conference and the rest of the pastoral team is selected by the EM’s SPRC.

**Location, facility:** As the name indicates, this type of EM will share the campus with the KM. Most of the times, the EM will contribute towards the cost of building maintenance and improvement.

**Typical timeline of development:** Every ministry is unique in charting their own growth. In the case of the Ascension Ministry, the EM became autonomous after fifteen years of existence as a ministry within the church. Other ministries that are started with the vision of becoming an independent church will typically become a self-sufficient church in about 3 to 5 years.
**Relationship with the KM (if any):** As the EM becomes self-sufficient, the relationship between the KM and EM will undergo a series of changes. From a parent-child relationship, the ministries will become more like siblings co-inhabiting the same campus – sharing certain identity, programs, and ministries while maintaining their own independence from one another.

**Assessment:**
This model offers similar benefits as the independent church model. In addition, this model allows the EM to maintain a relationship with the KM. Therefore, the children of the KM can transition into an EM as they graduate from high school and/or return home after college. This model is most effective in areas with a large pool of Korean Americans. Moreover, this model can serve to meet the needs of a wide range of age group in various life stages. However, as in any shared facility situations, this model requires great efforts to maintain open communication and to accommodate the needs of both congregations.

One example of this model is Ascension Ministry of Los Angeles Korean UMC. Ascension became autonomous in 1995 and is comprised of members whose average commute is about 20 miles one-way. The average range of age is in the late 20s to the mid-30s with a number of leaders in their 40s. Ascension offers complete services ranging from Toddler’s Program to Adult Bible Study. The uniqueness of this church is that their Sunday school program is a shared ministry of both the Korean and the English Ministry. By sharing their resources, both congregations are able to meet their needs and a sense of unity is maintained.