

**Chinese and Korean Congregations in Greater Washington D.C.**

Their Development and Public Engagement

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Wheaton College Graduate School  
Humanitarian Disaster Institute

## Welcome to the Study

Thank you for your interest in the Chinese and Korean Congregations Study. To serve these congregations in a practical way, this study provides insights about the status of Chinese and Korean churches in the greater Washington D.C. area, including staff and lay leaders, regular attendees, funds donated, volunteer projects, and other public engagement indicators. It also provides deeper insights about similarities and differences between Chinese and Korean congregations, and why they exist. These findings were drawn from a review of the literature on Chinese and Korean Christian churches in America, as well as the meanings and experiences of leaders and attendees of congregations as expressed in interviews. Finally, the report provides implications and recommendations, based on data collected, for Asian churches regarding their public engagement.

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This study was conducted as a part of the research program of the Humanitarian Disaster Institute, in its mission to equip Christians to learn to do good, better.

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## Study Introduction

Headlines often seem to talk of decline in religious affiliation, attendance, and membership. We see stories of shrinking or closing congregations. But that's far from a complete story. Congregational life across the US is extremely multi-faceted and varied. Immigrant churches may be some of the fastest growing and dynamic, yet their own situations are complex and multi-faceted (Foley & Hoge, 2007).

At the outset, it is important to note that all immigrant congregations are not the same. For example, among the myriad cultures represented in the United States faith communities, there are, for example, Hispanic congregations from many regions, African congregations that represent different languages and cultures, and a variety of vibrant Asian churches as well. But, of course, these are not the same either. For example, while Korean Christians may be the most well-known or studied to some extent in the U.S., Chinese congregations have grown through other unique patterns. These patterns include the development of believers and engagement in the public affairs of their communities. The COVID-19 global pandemic adds another layer of complexity, impacting the development of Chinese congregations now and into the future (Borja & Zhang, 2023).

The Washington D.C. area, home to more than 6 million people, is a place of great influence and disparity. While studies exist on Chinese, Korean and Pan-Asian churches on the East Coast and nationwide, and ethnographic studies have examined individual congregations, no existing studies are focused on the Chinese and Korean Evangelical churches in the greater Washington D.C. area. This study aims to make a baseline contribution to understanding communities of faith in the area. The primary aim is to understand the outreach and community engagement of these congregations, framed by insights into their community engagement, leadership, and financial practices.

**Intended Audience**

This study was created primarily to inform and support frontline Christian Chinese and Korean leaders in the greater Washington D.C. area. These readers include pastors, staff, and lay leaders in congregations, as well as their partners in mission at parachurch ministries, philanthropic institutions, government agencies, community organizations, and more.

# Sample and Methodology

A team of twelve researchers and assistants representing Chinese, Korean, and other cultures conducted this study, providing a mix of both emic and etic, that is cultural insider and outsider, perspectives. The qualitative phase of this project consisted of 42 semi-structured interviews with staff and lay leaders of Evangelical Protestant churches, conducted in four languages (English, Korean, Mandarin and Cantonese) over seven trips to the Washington D.C. area throughout 2022. In the quantitative phase, 109 individuals responded to the survey, also offered in four languages. These respondents were self-identified lay or staff leaders of Evangelical Protestant churches in the Washington D.C. area as well. We chose to keep surveys that were 75% or more completed, leaving a total of 63 observations<sup>i</sup>.

In order to analyze the data, this study uses a mixed method design, with the qualitative and quantitative administered concurrently and with integrated results (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). In this study, qualitative transcriptions were coded according to inductive themes and self-described ethnic groups. Quantitative data was compared in descriptive format, according to the groups: Chinese, Korean, and Other/Unknown. Comprehensive data from the qualitative and quantitative phases is also available.

## Conceptual Frameworks

The study revealed that congregations are represented along an array of ethnic groupings, rather than the dichotomous label of Chinese and Korean. The following is an attempt to describe the churches represented in the study. The study also drew its understanding of engagement from a model of internal and external service, with the services provided being spiritual or material in nature.

### Typology of Congregational Cultural Models

**Cultural Enclaves:** These congregations focus ministries on a single ethnic group. For Korean congregations this would include ministry only in Korean, with the cultural practices and attendees primarily Korean as well.

**Dual or Multi-Language:** These congregations run ministries concurrently in a language such as Mandarin as well as English. Within this model, there are great varieties of organization, from multiple services to two distinct congregations sharing a building. Decisions regarding use of facilities, resources and events are key factors to organizing.

**Hybrid:** These congregations frame their ministry as global and inviting to all, while many of the practices of the congregation maintain a cultural basis, such as foodways, worship style, and leadership practices. These congregations are primarily second-generation churches, mostly English-speaking, and appeal to multicultural families.

**Multi or Pan-Asian:** These congregations represent a variety of Asian cultures, languages and ethnicities. Multi-Asian cultural churches would include and draw from several cultures represented within the congregation. Pan-Asian churches emphasize a broader cultural identity of Asian (usually Asian-American) and practices within the congregation focus on bringing unity out of diversity, while still providing the comfort of worshipping with those of at least similar cultural backgrounds.

**Multicultural:** Multicultural congregations represent both people and cultures from many contexts. According to previous congregational studies, multicultural churches are those where a second racial/ethnic/cultural group or two or more minority ethnic groups make up at least 20% with no one group making up 80% or more <sup>2</sup>. They are known for bridging cultural practices and fostering unity out of diversity. Some churches are experiencing greater diversity, with many ethnicities coming to them even if they are not purposefully reaching out to certain groups. They are thus faced with a new set of opportunities and challenges.

## Serving Material and Spiritual Needs

Finally, in order to understand specifically the work of community engagement both internal and external to the congregation, we use the following schema as visualized in Figure 1 (Fulton & King, 2018; Cooper & Cooper, 2021).

Resources			
		Material	Spiritual
Audiences	Internal: within congregation	Institutional survival and growth	Intentional support
	External: outside congregation	Community service	Faith-based mission

The four categories of community engagement are:

1. Internal Material
2. Internal Spiritual



3. External Material
4. External Spiritual

Internal material community engagement activities describe the sharing of any good in the congregation with those who are active participants (financial giving to the church, shared meals, celebrations, job connections, or caring for one another's children).

Internal spiritual community engagement activities include intentional support for one another (prayer ministries, clergy support groups, praying for one another, and small groups).

External material help includes services like disaster relief, food pantries, provision of funds for rental support, home rehabilitation, or in-kind services. Churches may also provide educational services like ELL, advocacy, and mental health support.

External spiritual programs focus on Christian worship, evangelism, and discipleship. They include efforts such as church planting, evangelism, missions, and small groups that are focused on inviting new people.

Many activities function across multiple categories. For example, among the most challenging programs to categorize are small groups, as they both support existing participants in a congregation and invite members of the community to participate. Likewise, they focus on providing both material and spiritual help. Counseling services also require nuanced analysis since they can be described as providing intellectual help (material help) or pastoral help, which may be more spiritually oriented. Finally, social aspects of community engagement are integral to all types of activities, and do not have a separate category.

## Key Findings - Similarities and Differences

### *Regarding macro-level culture:*

1. **The Chinese label represents many languages and cultures:** Chinese culture is an umbrella term used for many groups. There is vast language, socioeconomic, and education differences represented within Chinese culture. For churches, this complicates the process of organizing, and multiplies possibilities for ways churches can operate.

2. **Koreans are more likely to be Christians when they immigrate:** Koreans may draw from the religious tradition of their homeland and are more accustomed to Christianity, as well as denominationalism, in the United States. Chinese are often less familiar with the ideas and practices of Christianity, due to the influence of Confucianism and Atheism in Chinese government and education systems and the diverse homelands they come from. For first generation immigrants, this has implications for both conversion as well as understanding how to navigate denominations. The implications for Chinese churches include networking, funding, vetting, and theological and governance structures of the U.S. denominational systems.
3. **Shared challenges regarding younger generations:** Both Korean and Chinese churches are faced with the challenge of passing on their faith to the next generation. Key to these discussions are the issues of language, education, cultural hierarchies, and how current social and political issues are discussed. Many youths leave the church after leaving their parents' home. In addition, many Chinese and Korean newcomers are international students, and often only remain in the United States for a few years. Campus ministries are effectively reaching many Asian students, yet they are not meaningfully connected with local churches.
4. **Washington D.C. culture described as place of power, disparity, speed of life, and social justice opportunities:** Interviewees described the influence of the greater Washington D.C. culture as one where power was sought after and favored; a place where the privileged and marginalized co-existed; where families and individuals lived extremely busy and achievement-oriented lives; and finally, as a place of great opportunity to help others and advocate regarding social issues such as poverty and immigration.
5. **Mental health is a prevalent need:** Mental health challenges were among the most mentioned in this study, especially for youth. Leaders mention that the need carries negative stigma for the Asian American community.

***Regarding meso-level communities:***

6. **Asian churches organize in many ways, and are often more diverse than Chinese and Korean labels capture:** Interviewees described an array of church models including: Ethnic Enclaves, with a strong focus on one language or culture; Dual or Multi-language, with concurrent or integrated worship services and ministries; Hybrid, a congregation based in one culture with an aim to be a home for diverse people; Multi or Pan Asian, congregations that identify around a share Asian heritage, often made up of second or third generation immigrants; and Multicultural, a congregation made up of diverse people with organizational practices that draw from a variety of cultures.

- 7. Korean churches are more likely to be highly regarded in the general community:** Because of the historic influence of Christianity on South Koreans, many respect the church even if they do not participate. Though popular Korean opinion is changing, churches in Korean culture are generally highly respected and considered part of mainstream culture, which increases their influence and stability. In particular, the position of pastor is respected, which may motivate young adults to pursue the career path. Finally, Korean communities are accustomed to looking to the church as an integral part of society. For this reason, Korean immigrants may convert to Christianity upon arrival in the United States for social and religious reasons.
- 8. Korean churches follow the U.S.-style religious marketplace models:** Some U.S. versions of Christianity are known for following marketplace models (Fink and Stark, 2005). The idea of a religious marketplace describes the competition that takes place as people make decisions about joining or changing churches, navigating church splits, or planting new churches. Such is the case with Korean congregations.
- 9. Asian-style hospitality has a strong presence in most churches:** Both Chinese and Korean churches draw from the beautiful traditions of Asian hospitality, regular shared meals after church services, and time with family and friends as normal parts of their church traditions. This bonds the congregations in deep ways.
- 10. Chinese often belong to commuter churches:** Due to the affordability of real estate in the greater Washington D.C. area, more Chinese churches mentioned being located a good distance from their participants and are known as commuter churches.
- 11. Korean churches continue in their exemplary commitment to prayer and missions:** Korean churches in the Washington D.C. area are continuing in the legacy of their Christian tradition by placing strong emphasis on ongoing prayer, generally considered to be a particular strength of Korean churches when compared across denominations and cultures. In some churches prayer occurs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They also participate in and support international missions work at high levels.
- 12. Chinese and Korean congregations serve their communities via distinct ministries, delegation to small groups, or community partnerships:** To serve the material and spiritual needs of internal and external communities, churches organize in these three main ways. Distinct ministries provide for easier coordination and control; small groups facilitate new relationships, broader reach, and shared ownership; and partnerships bring together diverse groups (who might not otherwise meet one another) around shared goals.

**13. Community engagement can be transactional or transformational:** Interviewees described times when helping simply provided for material and spiritual needs; in other cases, the provision of help grew into long-term relationships that changed the lives of both the helpers and those who received help.

**14. Community engagement seen as pre-evangelism:** Leaders described a broad view of helping in the community. Both lay and clergy describe this type of engagement as building bridges and creating civic spaces for people to again respect churches and become friends with those who are Christians.

**15. Congregational giving did not decrease for many churches:** Following national trends during the COVID-19 pandemic, churches remained stable in their habits of giving. In fact, some churches were in a stronger financial position due to the decrease in ministry costs. Other congregations, who were unable to provide giving opportunities online, did experience a decline. Churches in this study, overall, are hesitant to discuss giving regularly with their members.

***Regarding micro-level individual leaders:***

**16. Chinese are more likely to have dramatic stories of conversion:** In the qualitative interviews, some Chinese pastors told stories of dramatic conversions. Their conversions included visions from God. These leaders either pastored or helped in the church in China before immigrating to the United States, a time that was often followed by disillusionment, loneliness, and great anxiety. Their American Christian counterparts could not understand much of what they were experiencing. Yet, over time, they regained their sense of what God was calling them to do and began to again lead faith groups and churches. These experiences shaped their approach to leading.

**17. With longer pastorates comes inertia:** Both Chinese and Korean pastors reported that after a long tenure in ministry, it becomes more difficult to make changes or to reimagine the organization of the church.

**18. Senior pastors were born outside the United States:** According to survey responses, 100% of the senior pastors in the study were born outside the United States.

# Literature Review

This section explores existing literature on the diverse experiences and beliefs of millions of Chinese and Korean diasporas in the United States. It begins with general social statistics describing their rates of immigration, wealth, education, language preferences and beliefs. The section then describes brief histories of their patterns of immigration and congregations. Finally, the literature ends by examining Chinese and Korean patterns of philanthropy: giving and volunteering.

**Chinese and Korean diaspora demographics:** The Chinese diaspora in the United States comprises approximately 5.4 million individuals who were born in China, Hong Kong, or Macao, or who reported Chinese ancestry or race. The Korean diaspora in the United States comprises approximately two million individuals who were born in South Korea or North Korea or who reported Korean ancestry or race. The following graphic displays the number of Chinese and Korean immigrants per decade from 1980-2021. Of note is the significant decline in Korean immigrants in the decade from 2010-2019, and the growth of the number of Chinese immigrants. The overall immigrant population increased by 12% over that same decade (Batalova, 2023).

*Chinese and Korean Immigration to the United States 1980-2021:*

	Chinese	Korean
1980	370,000	290,000
1990	677,000	568,000
2000	1,192,000	864,000
2010	1,808,000	1,100,000
2020	2,380,000	1,039,000

**Washington D.C. as a destination:** Between 2017-2021, 64,000 Chinese and 59,000 Koreans immigrated to Washington D.C. While overall immigration rates are lower than other U.S. urban centers, Washington D.C. is a more popular destination for Koreans than for Chinese. While one might expect a sizable Chinese population in the historic Chinatown in Washington, D.C., this is no longer the case. This community once had around 3,000 Chinese residents. Following the 1968 riots, residents relocated to safer neighborhoods in Montgomery and Fairfax counties. The current Chinatown population features fewer than 300 residents of Chinese descent (“Take a Tour,” 2022).

The chart below compares the 2019 State Immigration data for the District of Columbia with the entire states of Maryland and Virginia, for residents born in China and Korea. The number in parenthesis under the China Population column indicates those who were born in Taiwan but counted as Chinese (“State Demographics Data - DC”, 2019)<sup>ii</sup>.

Location	Chinese Pop.	%	Korean Pop.	%
D.C.	4,366 (194)	5.1	2,125	2.5
MD	56,628 (11,068)	6.1	29,862	3.2
VA	58,349 (7,078)	5.4	46,125	4.3

**High levels of Chinese education-based immigration:** Despite drops because of the COVID-19 pandemic, China remains the leading country to send students to the United States. During the 2021-2022 school year, 296,000 Chinese and 24,000 Taiwanese international students were enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions, compared to 39,000 Korean international students. Likewise, Chinese citizens were approved for 50,000 H1B immigrant worker visas (which require a bachelor’s degree) compared to 3,500 petitions by Koreans.

**Chinese immigrants experience both higher rates of income and income disparity:** Chinese immigrants had higher median household incomes than the foreign-born population in 2021: \$78,000 (Taiwanese \$104,000) compared to the nearly \$72,000 median income of Korean immigrant households. At the same time, Chinese immigrants were slightly more likely to be in poverty (14%) than Koreans (12%).

**Koreans are more likely to speak English at home:** A greater percentage of Chinese immigrants reported having limited English proficiency (57%) than Koreans (49%). Likewise, Chinese were less likely to speak only English at home (11%) compared to Koreans (20%)

**Chinese give higher levels of remittances, but less per capita:** Chinese send more resources back home. Remittances, payments to those with ties such as family or community members, were given at a rate of \$53.5 billion, as received by China, Hong Kong, and Macao in 2021, or \$37 per capita with a population of 1,412 billion. South Korea received \$7.4 billion in global remittances via formal channels in 2020, or \$143 per capita with a population of 51.74 million.

**Chinese and Korean churches have differing patterns of belief and affiliation:** The American Religious Landscape in 2020 survey found that Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racial group in the United States, as well as the most religiously diverse. Thirty-four percent are Christian (10% Catholic), 10% Hindu, 9 % Buddhist, 8% Muslim, and 34% unaffiliated (2021). In an earlier study, Pew Research found that 62% of Korean Americans are Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, whereas 31% of Chinese Americans are. Relatedly, only 5% of Chinese Americans attend a religious service at least once a week, while 30% of Korean Americans do so. Chinese and Koreans who identify as Christians also retain other spiritual practices such as yoga and veneration of ancestors (Liu, 2012).

### **Chinese and Korean Diaspora Congregations in the United States**

Despite the Chinese having a larger share of the Asian population than Koreans, the latter lays claim to starting more churches. One source places the number of Korean congregations in America as high as 4,653. However, there are variations to this number<sup>iii</sup>.

The number of Chinese churches is also debatable. A conservative estimate would be 1,200 (Chuang, 2016a). The same author published a list of the largest Chinese and Korean churches in North America (Chuang, 2016b). For both ethnicities, these congregations are primarily concentrated in major urban centers in northern and southern California and along the northeastern United States coast, with just a handful in the South.

### **Comparing Chinese and Korean Immigration to the United States**

There are several significant factors that help explain the difference between the development of Chinese and Korean churches. The history of the Chinese arriving in America in large numbers began in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. An estimated 300,000 Chinese came to the United States between the beginning of the California gold rush until 1882, when they were legally barred from entry through the Chinese Exclusion Act (Lee, A., 2020).

Discrimination followed them regardless of their occupation or geographic location. Their homes and businesses were burned down; they were driven out of towns; they were attacked and murdered with impunity as there was little legal protection in place for them (E. Lee, 2019).

With the decline in the Chinese population after passage of several exclusionary laws, Koreans were recruited to take their place and began appearing in Hawaii in 1903. Because of anti-Asian sentiment and the subsequent restrictive immigration laws, significant Korean immigration did not take place until after World War II, and especially following the Korean War. Returning American soldiers brought their Korean brides home to the states. These veterans were also instrumental in adopting war orphans and sponsoring students to come to America. Approximately 6,500 brides, 6,300 adopted children and 6,000 students came from Korea between 1951 to 1964 (Lai & Arguelles, 2003).

Even greater numbers entered this country after the passage of the Hart-Cellar Immigration Act in 1965. Many of the Korean and Chinese who came as part of this third wave came as professionals or as students. When they were unable to find comparable jobs in America, they resorted to starting their own service-oriented businesses (J. Y. Lee, 1995). Their skills and their educational background enabled them to establish themselves quickly, a significant factor in promoting acculturation both for them and for their children (Fong, 1990).

From 1965 to 2019, Asian Americans have increased from less than 1% of the total U.S. population to 7% (22.4 million), nearly doubling since 2000. Chinese Americans are the largest Asian origin group at 24% (5.4 million). Koreans comprise 9% of the Asian population with 1.9 million people (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021).



## **Chinese Diaspora Congregations**

The Chinese church has never been central in the life of immigrants. Early on, to combat the racism they encountered and to find a place of belonging, secretive societies known as Tongs were formed in the various Chinatowns across the country. These organizations offered friendship, assistance with life matters, and even gambling, narcotics, and prostitution to its members. There was an unsavory aura around most Tongs due to ties to organized crime.

In addition, village associations (and the larger “clans” and district associations) were formed to provide familial connections for new immigrants. All the above mentioned entities provided overlapping circles of friendship, advice, assistance, lodging, employment opportunities, and social services to ease adjustment to life in America (Takaki, 1989; Min, 2006).

One other place where the many early Chinese bachelors congregated and socialized was in the back rooms of Chinese stores offering goods from China. In the back rooms, men could play Chinese chess or musical instruments, read, and find other amusement (Takaki, 1989).

It wasn't until 1853 that the first Chinese church in America was established by American missionaries to Hong Kong and China who had returned home. A Chinese Presbyterian church in San Francisco was organized on November 6 with four charter members, all of whom had attended a Presbyterian church in Hong Kong. Other mission work soon started among Episcopalians, Southern Baptists, Methodists, and the Congregational Church (Kwok, 2000).

In addition to being attracted by the educational opportunities available in the Chinese church, Chinese were grateful to the white missionary pastors who spoke out against anti-Asian violence and protested discriminatory legislation (Tseng, n.d.-a).

In the decades that followed, the Chinese church continued to actively engage in an evangelical social gospel. “In partnership with white missionaries and allies, Chinese Christians helped build public schools, YMCAs and YWCAs, and hospitals to serve the community” (Tseng, n.d.-a. par. 4). Students born in America joined the Chinese Student Christian Association, which challenged the discrimination they faced and participated in promoting African American civil rights (Tseng, n.d.-a).

The great influx of Chinese immigrants post-1965 altered the landscape of the Chinese church. With the closing of Communist China, the responsibility to champion the gospel fell on the diaspora Chinese. Dissatisfied with the social gospel of mainline American Protestantism, many preferred the spiritual warmth and personal piety of the evangelical camp (Tseng, n.d.-b). This connection remains.

Another major factor in the development of Chinese American Christianity was the rise of approximately 200 parachurch organizations. Functioning to some extent like denominations, these organizations continue to hold churches together in an informal alliance (Tseng, n.d.-b).

The large number of students who entered the country after 1965 led to an explosion of student groups, both Chinese and Korean, as chronicled in *God's New Whiz Kids* (Kim, 2006). These Bible study groups became the community hub for students, where their social needs would be met while evangelism took place, and many came to Christ. However, these groups usually operated independently from the local church (Kwok, 2000). These small group ministries functioned in many ways like local churches and in essence replaced them, albeit with a modified structure.

In addition to campus groups, local churches in college towns have attempted to engage students with their own student ministry. They offer help, encouragement, social interaction in the students' native (heart) language, food, and a familiar culture (Kwok, 2000). However, churches have found only limited success adopting the campus group paradigm. Several decades ago, many of the students studying in America spoke Cantonese. In recent years, Mandarin has become the dominant language as many students were born in China (and to a far lesser extent, from Taiwan). The practices of the past—picking up students from the airport, assisting them in procuring lodging and furniture, providing transportation for them, and fellowshiping over home-cooked Chinese meals—are no longer as effective.

Several of the students from China are now coming from well-to-do families. They can locate apartments on their own and have the means to obtain whatever they need. Groups now join based on their faith and their cultural communities to reach this socially upward class of students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For those who work in restaurants and grocery stores, Sunday is a busy workday. Even those who are believers find it difficult, if not impossible, to attend worship.

As mentioned above, the various associations in urban centers are more accessible for many workers on their day(s) off than a local church. Moreover, church facilities are often shuttered on weekdays when workers have down time.

As for those who are employed in white collar professions, Chinese community centers in the suburbs can offer language classes, Chinese holiday celebrations, and recreational outlets. Being bilingual also allows these educated immigrants to take advantage of offerings for the public.

Furthermore, diaspora Chinese churches have encountered the challenge of functioning as a unified church. The Cantonese congregations are aging with waning immigration from Hong Kong, and Mandarin has emerged as the more popular dialect spoken in many congregations. It is not unusual for churches to offer separate Mandarin and Cantonese worship services, even an English service. Those from Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, and other parts of Asia must seek ways to blend their diverse cultural, historical, social, and personal backgrounds together. Otherwise, it becomes even more challenging to worship, fellowship, serve, and evangelize effectively.

The first diaspora Chinese congregation in D.C. was the Chinese Community Church, which was organized in 1935 and catered to those who spoke Cantonese. The congregation flourished as thousands of immigrants moved into the Chinatown area. However, in the aftermath of the 1968 riots sparked by the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., residents relocated to safer suburban neighborhoods. Gentrification accelerated the decline of Chinatown as construction of the nearby Capital One arena led to increased property values. Today, there are only 300 Chinese residents who remain (*The Rise and Fall of DC's Chinatown*, n.d.). The Chinese Community Church stands as the only Chinese church in Chinatown.

Mandarin-speaking students meeting downtown organized the Chinese Mandarin Church in 1958, now the Chinese Christian Church of Greater Washington, D.C. Following the pattern of church members who relocated to the suburbs, this church moved to Silver Spring, MD in 1971.

A church split in 1976 led dissenters to establish the Chinese Bible Church of Maryland in Rockville, which is the largest Chinese church in the region. Both churches are in Montgomery County. Many of the Chinese churches in the nearby suburbs of Maryland and Virginia have members who were originally from these two churches (Yang, 1999).

### **Korean Diaspora Congregations**

The story of the Korean church in America is markedly different from that of the Chinese. From the beginning, the church has played a pivotal role in acclimating immigrants to their new homeland.

Relations between the two countries officially began On May 22, 1882, when the Korea-U.S. Treaty of Peace, Amity and Trade was signed. When Christian missionaries arrived in Korea in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, they found a receptivity to the gospel unlike in other parts of Asia. The work of Presbyterian missionary Horace Underwood and others led to the gradual growth of the Korean church, accelerated by the Great Revival of 1907. This momentous event also established the call to early morning prayer (Huysen-Hong, 2005). The first wave of Koreans arrived in America in 1903, working on sugarcane plantations in Hawaii. Clergy and lay leaders planted churches, and the Methodist denomination in particular provided networks between Hawaii and mainland United States for the Korean newcomers. From there, Koreans found work opportunities in Southern California, forming the first Korean congregations in the U.S. mainland beginning in 1904 (Yoo, 2010). Though few in number, some Koreans soon traveled to Washington D.C. in accord with their growing movement for independence from Japan, which was attained in 1919. Numbers of Koreans remained small throughout the following decades, but by the 1950's there were more than 100 Koreans in Washington D.C.

The Korean Church in Washington was the first Christian Korean congregation in the area, founded in 1951. Mostly Presbyterians, the group was hosted by Foundry Methodist Church. They established a Korean-language school, and created a variety of cultural activities. Later it became Korean United Methodist Church of Greater Washington, now located in McLean, Virginia.

Another significant factor that contributed to Christian conversion in Korea was the close relationship between Christianity and Western culture. Korean Christians actively promoted individualism, materialism, and modern industrialization (Rhee, 1995).

While only 1% of Korea was Christian in 1900, those claiming a Protestant faith in South Korea had climbed to nearly 20% by 2010<sup>iv</sup>. Those who migrated to the United States banded together to face bigotry. Ethnic enclaves provided social and economic support to immigrants, while grocers formed community associations. However, as these independent associations emerged, it also led to competition between such groups within the Korean community (Suzuki, 2003).

Two antithetical forces seemed in play: Koreans' strong sense of ethnocentrism, developed as a small country struggling to survive as it confronted formidable neighbors, and the spirit of competition among them (Song & Lee, 2022). These two forces reappear in church relationships.

In America, the Korean church has emerged as the major center for Korean networking. A common mantra is, "If two Japanese people get together, they will found a company; if two Chinese people get together, they will open a restaurant; if two Koreans get together, they will make a church" (Suzuki, 2003, p. 291).

While a Korean delegation has been present in D.C. since the late 1800s, a Korea Town has never existed (*Beyond Chinatown*, 2022). The first Korean churches were not planted until the 1950s, when a more sizable Korean population moved into the area. The founding of new churches of various denominations was directly proportional to the growth of the Korean community. The Korean church was integral to the life of this immigrant community (Kwon, 2004). As Koreans moved to the suburbs, new churches followed. Congregations are concentrated in five counties: “Montgomery and Prince George’s in Maryland, and Fairfax, Arlington, and Alexandria in Virginia” (Kwon, 2004, p. 245). Population has surged as Koreans continue to live in communities reflecting their ethnic identity.

One significant study identified four major ways in which the church has been instrumental in uniting Korean immigrants. While approximately 40% of these immigrants did not attend church in Korea, the ethnic church is attractive because it provides the following ways to adjust to American life (Min, 1992):

#### 1. *Fellowship*

While roughly one-fourth of Korean immigrants join alumni or occupational associations (Hurh & Kim, 1987), many more prefer the church as it meets more regularly and frequently. Social interaction among congregants is encouraged and a family atmosphere is created, particularly in smaller congregations (most Korean churches).

#### 2. *Korean Cultural Traditions*

The Korean language, foods, and traditional clothing are featured at events and celebrations.

#### 3. *Social Services*

Since Korean social service agencies are limited in number, the pastoral staff and leaders aid new members by providing guidance regarding employment, housing, children’s education, and other services. Counseling is also available for families as they adjust to living in a new culture (Min, 1992).

#### 4. *Social Status and Positions*

While most immigrants held professional and managerial positions in Korea, they were generally more limited in occupational choices in America, particularly through the 1970s - 1990s. Securing leadership positions at church elevates their personal status. (Min, 1992).

While these functions of the ethnic church apply to the Chinese church as well, the sheer physical size of China with its numerous dialects, regional differences, and sub-cultures presents formidable obstacles to forging unity. Korea is much smaller geographically, and all its citizens speak the same language and share common foods and traditions. China is 96 times larger in land mass (9,562,910 km<sup>2</sup> to 100,339 km<sup>2</sup>) with a population discrepancy of 1.4 billion people to 51.7 million (*Country Comparison*, n.d: China / South Korea). Thus, there are fewer obstacles toward banding together for the Korean community than for the Chinese.

Furthermore, as Koreans are more prone than Chinese to seek out needed resources at a local congregation, Korean church growth in the U.S. far outnumbers Chinese churches, despite the larger population of the latter. Between 1970 and 1985, Korean churches exploded from fewer than 75 to more than 1600. The burgeoning number of new immigrants helped fuel this growth. Additionally, the growth of the church in South Korea, especially in the 1970s and 1980s (The Billy Graham Crusade in Seoul in 1973 drew 1.1 million people.), meant that immigrants brought their background of spirituality and the revival experience with them (Song, 2022).

In 2018, the number of churches had reached 4,454—or one church for every 323 Koreans living in America (Kim, 2018).

Aside from the socio-cultural attraction of the Korean church, another significant factor behind this growth has been substantiated by researchers. “In fact, the dramatic increase in the number of Korean American churches has largely been due to schisms. The schisms, accompanied by an abundant supply of Korean ministers, have caused fierce inter-church competition in recruiting church members in the immigrant communities.” (Shin & Park, 1988, p. 236; Oh, J., 2021). One scholar estimates that these church splits occur once every five years (K. Lee, 1994).

In a nationwide study of 42 Korean churches, including 18 in the DMV region, it was found that 34 of them had experienced schisms; only 8 had not. The results are found below (Shin and Park, 240).

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Mean (X)</u>
Congregation size at schism	142
Size of splinter group	66
Number of years between founding and schism or between schisms	4.8
Years of professional experience of pastors	6.7

Nearly half of parishioners (46.7%) have left a former church to join or plant new congregations. Among the major sources for these schisms are (1) power and/or status struggles within the church; (2) conflict over denominational affiliation (less prevalent after 1975); (3) competition between the lead pastor and the associate pastor; (4) disputes over the purchase of a church building; (5) a heterogeneous Korean population with differences in economic, social, and political orientation (Shin and Park, 1988); (6) a lack of understanding about church life from new believers; (7) theological controversy; and (8) conflict with the English-speaking second generation (Chang, 1998).

The youth in the church observe and are affected whenever there are church divisions. Approximately half of the teens between the 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades experienced these schisms at least once during those few years, while 2% experienced this phenomenon across all these years as the initial church split led to successive schisms, one after another (Oh, S., 1995, p. 4).

Regarding evangelism of new immigrants in recent decades, a fresh analysis (Oh, J., 2021) of Korean immigration trends in the U.S. describes the failure of the Korean-American church to adjust to the new context that has emerged. Consequently, neighborhood churches are not reaching new immigrants effectively and are struggling to incorporate them into their communities.

Whereas in the past, Korean immigrants arrived as legal permanent residents (LPRs), today many are short-term residents (international students or corporate personnel). They then later apply for LPR or green card status to legally remain in the U.S. This new generation can locate housing, desirable schools for their children, and other support themselves through websites and online communities. Churches are still being sought out by short-term residents and immigrants for social support and friendship.

When Korean pastors assess their situations, they attribute the loss of church members and the difficulties in planting new churches to a decline in migration. Although many Koreans in Korea esteem life in America, now that Korea has grown so much culturally and economically, less people decide to immigrate for the long term. Two major denominations, the Korean Association of the United Methodist Church (KAUMC) and the Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad (KPCA), both tie the decline in membership to decreasing immigration numbers (Oh, J., 2021).

### **Second-Generation Chinese and Korean Congregations**

While nearly all churches conduct worship services and Sunday School classes in English in order to minister to the needs of the children, there has been an exodus from the immigrant church for several decades. This “Silent Exodus” was first brought to national attention in a *Christianity Today* article in 1996: “There has been a silent exodus of church-raised young people who find their immigrant churches irrelevant, culturally stifling, and ill equipped to develop them spiritually for life in the multicultural 1990s” (Lee, H., 1996, p. 50).

One problem cited is the presence of *leadership inequality* because the older generation makes the dominant decisions. The Senior Pastor is almost always from the first-generation. Another problem is *ethnic identity*. Whereas the older generation is comfortable in a monocultural setting, the second-generation can interact in multicultural settings. With assimilation into western culture comes inter-racial friendships and marriage. A third point of contention is the lack of quality *spiritual education and training* for the younger generation (Lee, H., 1996).

A recent project (Li, 2020) found that a generation later, the relationship between first and second-generation pastors in Chinese churches is still less than ideal. English-speaking pastors do not feel supported, respected, or trusted as they do ministry (Li, 2020). As a result, the departure of the second-generation from Chinese and Korean churches continues. In 2014, there was a follow-up article to the *Silent Exodus* identifying new models of church that had emerged. A few English ministries of Asian heritage churches had become independent or semi-independent. Other congregations had become pan-Asian or multi-ethnic (Lee, H., 2014).

These developments align with the conclusions of a much earlier study that compared what transpired in Buddhist and Methodist congregations in Canada (Mullins, 1987). There are sociological forces at work in immigrant religious settings. While the first-generation is monolingual and seeks to preserve its culture, the second-generation learns the host society's language (in this case English) and seeks to assimilate into the dominant culture. The third generation becomes monolingual again, but this time the transition is to English. These findings are summarized in the following table (Mullins, 1987, p. 324).



### Selected Organizational Aspects of Ethnic Church Evolution

Stages	Characteristics of Membership	Environmental Changes	Adaptation Required	Consequences for Organization
<b>First</b>	Original immigrants; Monolingual			
<b>Second</b>	Original immigrants and native-born generation; Bilingual	Cultural assimilation	Bilingual minister and introduction English language services	Effective recruitment of acculturated generation
<b>Third</b>	Monolingual	Structural assimilation; membership leakage through mobility and intermarriage; disappearance	Goal succession and de-ethnicization	Transformed from ethnic to multiethnic organization

Regardless of the religious affiliation in question, Christian or otherwise, there is a pattern of progressive assimilation with successive generations. The desire for ethnic maintenance in immigrant churches has proven to be unsustainable without a steady stream of new immigrants in each successive generation.

#### **Summary regarding the contemporary Chinese and Korean Church Environment**

Church attendance for the Chinese remains low, as the overwhelming majority do not attend church. Attending special services such as for Easter or Christmas requires a personal invitation, since these holidays are not part of Chinese religious culture. Residents in the DMV region tend to be busy professionals who do not rely on the services of the church for support, unless they desire to be married in a church or seek counseling (Tung & Lee, 2023).

Chinese churches are primarily non-denominational and function autonomously; they are self-governing and financially self-sufficient. While there may be joint cooperation on inter-church projects, these are the exceptions and not the norm.

As Cantonese speaking congregations age, there has been growth in the number of Mandarin language congregations, including those that are composed primarily of members from mainland China. These churches are situated in the outer suburbs, in the areas where this population resides and are indigenous and culturally attuned to those from China. Meanwhile, the second-generation English speakers continue to leave Chinese churches in large numbers (Tung & Lee, 2023).

The heyday for Korean churches in the greater D.C. Metropolitan area occurred several decades ago with the surge of Korean immigrants. Since then, new churches were planted; however, the majority of these new starts emerged from church splits and divisions.

The English Ministry (EM) naturally developed in these churches from the children of the first-generation parents in the Korean Ministry (KM). As these congregations matured in age, many EMs asserted their independence by leaving to go out on their own. “Unfortunately, the vast majority of these young EM congregations closed their doors within a few years. Currently, there are only 3 larger (200+ member) EM churches that are healthy” (Cha et al., 2009).

There are now fewer Korean American seminarians and young pastors. Many avoid serving in churches that are KM-led, if the church has a poor reputation for working with and growing the EM. The immigrant churches that do fare better are “those that have transitioned to an interdependent and intergenerational model” (Cha & Lee, 2023). Open Door Presbyterian Church in northern Virginia is one example.

There is hope for the future for Korean believers, because the church continues to be a place to find community. Secular community organizations which provide social services have Christians on their staff who present a Christian witness and develop relationships with new immigrants, with the intention of inviting them to church. Moreover, churches continue to offer varying degrees of social services to the community, such as ESL classes, legal help, and health consultation/care.

As Korean culture becomes more mainstream with K-dramas, K-pop, and Korean BBQ, second-generation Korean Americans feel more comfortable rediscovering their ancestral roots. Not completely fitting into a majority white culture church, Korean-American believers continue to search for their place in the Korean church (Cha & Lee, 2023).

Factors contributing to the success of an immigrant congregation may be somewhat more complex than that of other organizations, and even other churches. The book *Growing Healthy Asian American Churches*, which outlines nine aspects of churches (referred to as households of God) considered to be markers of health, as a conceptual framework for analysis. Cha et al. identified these churches as grace-filled, truth-embodying, fostering healthy leaders, trusting, hospitable, multigenerational, relational across genders, and brimming with mercy and justice (2009).

## Community Engagement and Volunteering in Immigrant Churches

Studies show that religious people are more civically engaged and generous than their average U.S. counterparts (Putnam and Campbell, 2010; Steensland, King & Duffy, 2022). Churches are known for providing volunteers for both faith-based and secular social services programs (Grettenberger, 2001, Ammerman, 2002, Cnaan, 2002). Indeed, religion's "network of morally freighted personal connections, coupled with an inclination toward altruism" helps to explain the good-neighborly nature of many religious Americans (Putnam & Campbell, 2010; p. 492, cited in Steensland, King & Duffy, 2022).

A consistent predictor of giving and volunteering is attendance at religious services (Becker & Dhingra, 2001, Lewis et al., 2013), though some studies nuance this finding (Beyerlein and Hipp 2006; Driskell et al., 2008). Religious volunteers have been known to align volunteering with political values (Lewis et al., 2013). For example, Protestant Christians who identify as evangelicals are more likely to focus on serving the needs of their congregations, parachurch organizations, or surrounding communities, and less likely to give to and volunteer with general civic activities, particularly across political lines (Lewis et al., 2013; Beyerlein & Hipp, 2006; Lichterman, 2009).

Studies of immigrant giving and volunteering report that such activities can provide informal learning of language and culture, as well as provide new communities of belonging—what some have called a 'stepping stone' for integration into a new society (Osili & Xie, 2009; Guo, 2014; Handy & Greenspan, 2009). A study of immigrants in the Netherlands found that they were more likely to engage in religious volunteering than their non-immigrant counterparts, results which were confirmed in 2018 in a study in Denmark; explained, again, by the presence of religiosity, or the importance of religion in the immigrants' lives (Carabain & Bekkers, 2011; Qvist, 2018).

Chinese immigrants engage in volunteering and giving that benefits the family, clan, community, and village—a balance of their newfound ties to the United States and Chinese ethnic heritage. Overall, Chinese give in three categories: charity, which provides aid to the poor; mutual benefit, which gives relief and protection reciprocally; and civic betterment, which promotes the overall welfare of the public through voluntary giving and volunteering (Ho, 2004). Chinese give with a sense of "guanxi," translated as relationships or connections, which means this giving will reflect an extended form of family and ethnic unity. In the past, informal giving, remittances, and giving circles have been extremely popular forms of giving. While these forms remain, high net worth individuals are increasingly making transformative gifts to influential institutions. Online giving has changed as well, with the use of apps such as TenCent in WeChat and other online apps encouraging micro-donations (Qu, 2020).

Korean giving likewise reflects Confucian values regarding dedication to family and clans, and respect for hard work. Giving comes from a sense of duty and community norm. Since most Koreans in the United States were born in Korea, many of these values remain strong, and much of giving is dedicated to the welfare of Korean communities here and in Korea. Korean terms such as “po-jo-bi,” “chee-won-bi,” “gi-bu-kum,” and “mo-kum” all refer to this value and practice of philanthropy (Smith et al., 1999). Second-generation immigrants demonstrate characteristics of their ancestral homeland and current context, as well as a third culture of giving which blends elements of both (Moon et al., 2014).

The combined factors of faith, culture, and social benefits result in active and generous immigrant churches. According to the United States’ National Congregations Study, immigrant churches provided more services and were more likely to spend an excess of \$10,000 per year for social service community development and neighborhood organizing projects than the average U.S. congregation (Chaves et al., 2020; Schneider & Foley, 2003).

What services do these immigrant churches provide? Like other congregations, immigrant churches provide money, organize volunteers, collect in-kind goods, and communicate needs. Much of these services address short-term needs and serve local communities, though immigrant congregations are known for supporting needs in their countries of origin, as well. Depending on both religious tradition and local context, some congregations will partner with other social-service organizations to accomplish shared goals (Schneider & Foley, 2003). Finally, a study of Korean churches in the Los Angeles area found that these churches served their communities human, economic and social needs both within and beyond their congregations (Boddie et al., 2011).

**Assets and Services provided by 16 Korean American Churches**

<b>Domains</b>	<b>Human Development</b>	<b>Economic Development</b>	<b>Social Development</b>
<b>Neighborhood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer School</li> <li>• Saturday School</li> <li>• Collaboration with schools</li> <li>• Summer youth programs</li> <li>• Angel Tree participating churches/ other prison ministry outreach</li> <li>• Health clinics</li> <li>• Acupuncture services</li> <li>• Health Insurance programs</li> <li>• Health education</li> <li>• Free Breast Cancer Screening</li> <li>• Programs for homeless</li> <li>• Domestic violence support and shelter</li> <li>• Horseback riding camp</li> <li>• Soup Kitchen</li> <li>• Cultural programs</li> <li>• Music lessons</li> <li>• Translation services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thrift shop</li> <li>• Food co-op</li> <li>• Scholarships for high school students</li> <li>• Sub-grants to local nonprofits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Center</li> <li>• Election poll site</li> <li>• Community crime collaborations with Police Department\</li> <li>• Community festivals, concerts, bazaars, Halloween alternative celebration, and other events</li> <li>• Neighborhood cleanups</li> </ul>

<b>Faith-based Organization (such as their own congregations and other nonprofits)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20,105 members</li> <li>• Worship services</li> <li>• Small group ministries</li> <li>• Life-stage ministries</li> <li>• Retreat Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$32.9 million in tithes, offerings, &amp; missions gifts</li> <li>• Endowment Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$86 million in real estate, 3,518,247 sq.ft.</li> <li>• Building construction projects</li> <li>• Partnerships with Latino residents and churches to send doctors and teachers to support missions work in Latin American countries</li> </ul>
<b>Individual &amp; Families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior visitation/ care</li> <li>• Support for persons with disabilities</li> <li>• Substance Abuse Recovery Programs</li> <li>• Parent-child support /care- giver education</li> <li>• Childcare</li> <li>• Marriage counseling</li> <li>• Nutrition programs</li> <li>• TaeKwonDo classes</li> <li>• Korean language school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance to apply for government programs</li> <li>• Financial planning</li> <li>• Financial education</li> <li>• Tax preparation</li> <li>• Career counseling</li> <li>• Job training</li> <li>• Computer training</li> <li>• Job placement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer opportunities</li> </ul>

(Boddie et al., 2011)

## Findings

The following section reports on the findings of the mixed methods quantitative and qualitative study of Chinese and Korean Christian congregational leaders in the greater Washington D.C. area. Please see page six for the methodology of this study.

## Participation

This section reports on differing patterns of participation as reported by respondents.

### Quantitative Findings

#### Regular participants in the congregation:

Primary Ethnicity	Adult (18 yo and up) Participation	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	Less than 25	6.67% (1/15)
Chinese	25-49	20% (3/15)
Chinese	50-99	40% (6/15)
Chinese	100-500	33.33% (5/15)
Korean	25-49	5% (2/40)
Korean	50-99	20% (8/40)
Korean	100-500	47.5% (19/40)
Korean	More than 500	27.5% (11/40)
Other/Unknown	50-99	25% (1/4)
Other/Unknown	100-500	25% (1/4)
Other/Unknown	More than 500	50% (2/4)

*Proportions do not include 4 missing answers.*

### Children, people 18 years or younger, who regularly participate

Primary Ethnicity	Non-Adult Participation	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	Less than 25	46.67% (7/15)
Chinese	25-49	46.67% (7/15)
Chinese	50-99	6.67% (1/15)
Korean	Less than 25	20% (8/40)
Korean	25-49	30% (12/40)
Korean	50-99	20% (8/40)
Korean	100-500	25% (10/40)
Korean	More than 500	5% (2/40)
Other/Unknown	Less than 25	25% (1/4)
Other/Unknown	100-500	50% (2/4)
Other/Unknown	More than 500	25% (1/4)

*Proportions do not include 4 missing answers.*

### Core volunteers for the congregation's activities in the community

Primary Ethnicity	Number of Core Volunteers	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	0-9	46.67% (7/15)
Chinese	10-19	33.33% (5/15)
Chinese	20-49	13.33% (2/15)
Chinese	50 or more	6.67% (1/15)
Korean	0-9	40% (16/40)
Korean	10-19	12.5% (5/40)
Korean	20-49	27.5% (11/40)
Korean	50 or more	20% (8/40)
Other/Unknown	10-19	25% (1/4)
Other/Unknown	20-49	25% (1/4)
Other/Unknown	50 or more	50% (2/4)

*Proportions do not include 4 missing answers.*



## Languages used in worship services

Service Language	Total Number of Churches in Survey
English	42/60
Chinese	13/60
Korean	29/60
<i>Numbers do not include 3 missing answers.</i>	

## Ethnicity of congregations

Primary Ethnicity	Service Language	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	Because of language abilities, second generation immigrants in our church mostly attend the English service.	56.25% (9/16)
Chinese	Our service/s is/are multilingual	31.25% (5/16)
Chinese	We hold a service in English.	62.5% (10/16)
Chinese	We hold a service in a non-English language	68.75% (11/16)
Korean	Because of language abilities, second generation immigrants in our church mostly attend the English service.	47.5% (19/40)
Korean	Our service/s is/are multilingual	35% (14/40)
Korean	We hold a service in English.	50% (20/40)
Korean	We hold a service in a non-English language	52.5% (21/40)
Other/Unknown	Because of language abilities, second generation immigrants in our church mostly attend the English service.	50% (2/4)
Other/Unknown	We hold a service in English.	75% (3/4)
Other/Unknown	We hold a service in a non-English language	25% (1/4)
<i>Proportions do not include 3 missing answers. Note that the proportions may not add up to 100% because respondents could select all options that applied.</i>		

## Qualitative Findings

Interviewees commented on participation through the lenses of language, the effects of COVID, and stages of life.

**Language** – Interviewees consistently reported that language played a primary role regarding church participation.

1. **A Primary Means of Relationships** - Perhaps the primary consideration regarding Chinese and Korean churches is language. Though they live in the same city, congregants navigate their lives using distinct languages. Language is the primary means by which people establish and maintain relationships. In short, it is how they relate to God and their church community.

*“Sometimes people will speak in English and then they will respond in Korean. We’re going through a season where we need to find consolation.”*

2. **A Variety of Approaches During Services** - Language, then is one of the keys to organizing churches. As stated above, many churches offer two or even three languages in their church programs, especially for significant occasions. Some have separate services, others put translations of their songs and announcements on the screen, and still others provide headsets and interpreters for attendees to hear sermons and teachings in their respective languages.

3. **A Deep Bond or Barrier to Closeness** - But language influences churches at a deeper level as well. Knowing and not knowing another language can create class distinctions within churches. Some may choose to not learn a language because of the reputation associated with it. In other cases, second generation congregants are more comfortable with English, and this distinction may create a hurdle in discipling a child in their Christian faith.

*“We’re aware, especially on Korean side, that there are language barriers. One way we try to overcome that is every month, the last Saturday, we do have early morning family gathering worship together, which is led in English. At the same time, we have a time where we pray for our children, we teach English with our children.”*

4. **A Fluid Challenge** – Because the constitution of Chinese and Korean churches is highly influenced by macro-migration patterns, some churches have changed the primary language of their church, and others have added and removed services and programs more than once to accommodate the preferred languages of their attendees. Others decided against such changes.

*“Shortly after we first came, they actually tried to do a Cantonese service for a while, but that didn’t succeed. I forget how long it lasted. It wasn’t more than two years. It’s interesting because the church used to be originally Cantonese-speaking, then switched over to Mandarin as more and more people from Mainland China came into the area.”*

5. **A Key to Church Leadership** - One consistent pattern in the data was that while congregants and leaders often could speak multiple languages, the board of elders and top-level staff at the church most often use one language, be it Cantonese, English, Mandarin or Korean. This common language of the leadership had implications regarding how decisions were made. A few churches were implementing unique practices, such as Korean-speaking elders assuming responsibility and support for the English-speaking congregation. One other church made it a priority to recruit elders who were bilingual.

*“That is a huge roadblock for even our near future too. For example, our board meetings, when we get together, we’re talking about the important matters. If we can’t communicate clearly-- There’s nuances in your language and things like this. Our EC (English Congregation) elders, sometimes they have a hard time because they can’t articulate their thoughts properly.”*

**COVID-19** – Interviewees shared perspectives on their congregation’s experiences with the pandemic.

1. **Decreased but also New Attendees** - Similar to national trends, most churches experienced a decline in attendance coming out of COVID. Churches reported up to a 30% decrease in attendance. Many, however also reported that the mix of attendees changed after COVID, that new people, often young families, became connected through informal networks. These new attendees were quite active. People used the opportunity to look for something different, so in some cases churches are exchanging members. Also, leadership changes often happened in this time.

*“Especially since COVID, we’ve got some real problems. Zoom meetings killed the youth group.”*

2. **On Average, Finances Stable or Grew** - By and large, leaders reported that finances at their church did not decrease during COVID. They stated several reasons for this. First, many churches did not experience a decrease in giving, in alignment with the philanthropic sector at large. Churches also reduced their ministry costs during this time. Finally, some churches received support from the federal government through the paycheck protection program. Some smaller churches and small business owners, who were unable for various reasons to access government support, however, did suffer financially during COVID.
3. **Newfound Patterns of Engagement** - Pastors report that some of the members and regular attenders, especially affluent empty nesters are disengaging from church. They will come to church from time to time, or watch online while frequently on vacations. Some people just began to return to attend. Some will show up one week and not return for one month. By and large, the leadership and core of the congregations has returned, serving faithfully. Those who were on the fringe experienced the massive change in schedule and lifestyle as freedom from their previous commitments, which oftentimes includes the church.

*“I would say multiple people have said they would've gone through so much isolation, loneliness, stress, but it was their discipleship groups that were their lifeline. They don't know what they would've done if they weren't in a group, like where they're meeting regularly with two or three other men or women, and being able to share honestly, pray for each other, and to really be a support for one another.”*

4. **Tough Decisions and New Skills for Leaders** – The decision to close early on during COVID was a difficult decision. Staff had to pivot quickly and had to acquire the skills necessary to lead a church online, such as using Zoom. Both the staff and members prayed regarding these quick changes and reported that God answered their prayers. Later, pastors had more time to plan and think given the inability to administer programs in person. One pastor commented that some of the church's programs and services should have been located online previously, and COVID gave them the impetus to make the switch.
5. **Traumatic for Leaders and Members** - COVID was a deeply traumatic experience for all in the church, and all suffered differently. Pastors mentioned the difficulty of ministering to those who lost their livelihoods or were high-risk for the disease, as well as reflecting on how the pandemic challenged their abilities to lead others. Some expressed a sense of over-exhaustion or burnout.

*“Of course because of COVID, we went through tremendous stress. The congregants. Some of them lost their job. Some of them had to close their cleaners. Some of them had to work extra hour because there were no workers available. I think it was a trauma for pastors as well.”*

6. **Renewed Dependence on God and Passion for Prayer** - Leaders called for churches and believers around the world to put their hope in God while they simultaneously responded to the facts of the situation. Early on, we knew that if we didn't respond to Covid with facts, then our church would fall. Volunteers helped lead services in ways they were previously unwilling to help share the responsibilities that were heavy on pastors and staff during the beginning of the pandemic.
7. **Finding Creative Ways to Connect** - Particularly for elderly people, staying connected to the congregation during COVID was challenging. Some did not have devices with the necessary technology, and many did not have the knowledge of how to use it. However, over the initial months, these members found solutions to stay connected to their congregations utilizing technology to do so.

*“But within the first several months, a woman named Mrs. Wong who lived in Virginia, said she had to pray and worship. I can't do this living by myself. Early on Sunday morning, she would borrow her neighbor's iPhone. The neighbor set up her iPhone for Zoom before lending it to Mrs. Wong. That's how she participated. When I heard this story, I was touched. She said she had no solution except for God providing one. So, God revived the Cantonese, English and Mandarin congregations.”*

**Stages of life** – Interviewees commented on differences in experiences and meanings of participating in the church based on age.

1. **Infancy/Toddlerhood/Preschool years/Early school years** - Some children did not engage with others outside of their household for the first few years of their life, due to COVID. Beginning at church after the pandemic required time and trust from the parents for the children to trust their leaders.
2. **Adolescence** - Youth are consistently mentioned as a challenge for churches to engage, particularly during and after COVID. Characterized as a revolving door – engage less during high school, they may attend, but are difficult to engage in conversation. Connections can be made by inquiring into their questions regarding life or theology, what they would like to discuss. They often participate more in campus ministries during college, or else do not attend religious services at all.

*“I believe the younger people have different thoughts, but we all understand each other. We don’t have a big trouble. For example, women’s ministry is led by the younger women, and the older women support in the back. We are on good terms.”*

3. **Young Adulthood** – While absent in many congregations, in some churches these individuals are the most present. They serve in the most visible places and are generous with dedicating their time to the church as well as their small groups. This group is characterized by leaning politically progressive or liberal. They are in favor of mercy, justice and seeking the welfare of the city, but are less open to teaching about personal disciplines regarding their money and body. In other churches, this group is noticeably absent, with much less commitment.

*“They all ask different questions. They all see the world differently. They have different lenses. To create a gospel, to communicate a gospel that is comprehensive of all their questions and gets them excited to serve the community, that’s been a good challenge, a wonderful challenge, utilizing the strengths of each generation while allowing for their diversity.”*

4. **Middle Adulthood** - For families with children, it can be more difficult to find time to serve. For those with youth-age kids, it is a particular challenge to parent during times of COVID. These families will often attend an English service. This group prioritizes a growing understanding of the Bible. For those who attend a service other than English, often the motivation is to preserve the cultural heritage for the family’s children.
5. **Late adulthood: Empty Nesters** - One pastor commented on empty nesters stating that after COVID, their mentality is to have recreation and travel as much as they can, for more affluent congregations. They are more likely to watch online, will continue to give, but do not serve often in the community. They also prioritize a growing understanding of the Bible.

6. **Late adulthood:** Many congregations are represented by this generation. Seniors are characterized by prioritizing holiness and being faithful. They have physical needs that require special concerns for building planning, such as all rooms accessible on one floor. Many of them, like church founders, experienced dramatic movements of God in their youth connected to their immigration experiences. They have less interest in biblical justice issues, rather see circumstances as the result of individual choice.

*“The elderly people in our church are great role models of faith. Younger people follow and show obedience. The elderly people are the center and they lead the younger people. I really love that. It is important in family the role of parents, right?”*

*“While there are cultural differences, the love and care provided by their grandparents are not easily forgotten.”*

## Community Engagement and Volunteering

The following section reports on findings regarding how congregations practice giving, volunteering, and fostering relationships in their communities.

### Quantitative Findings

Two thirds of the churches represented in the survey indicated that they engage in activities or service projects to benefit individuals outside of their own congregations. About half contributed to some sort of natural disaster relief. More than half of both Chinese and Korean churches also give to needs associated with their country of origin.

Churches identified as primarily Korean in the survey seemed to have a special interest in service trips, with a large number participating in both domestic (67%, 24/36) and international (87%, 33/38) service projects.

### **Percent of congregations engaged in any human service projects, outreach ministries or mission, social services, or other activities intended to help people who are not members of the congregation over last 12 months**

Chinese: 93% (14/15)

Korean: 87.5% (35/40)

Other: 100% (4/4)

**Percentage of congregations with activities, projects or programs completely run by your congregation compared to those that involve collaborations of some sort with other groups or organizations.**

Chinese: 67% (10/15) report that some or all activities, projects or programs are completely run by their congregation. The remaining 5 congregations collaborate on all programs.

Korean: 67% (26/39) report that some or all activities, projects or programs are completely run by their congregation. The remaining 13 congregations collaborate on all programs.

Other: 50% (2/4) report that some or all activities, projects or programs are completely run by their congregation. The remaining 2 congregations collaborate on all programs.

**Percentage of congregations that participated in any efforts to help people respond to or recover from a natural disaster, such as an earthquake, flood, tornado or wildfire over last 12 months.**

Chinese: 53% (8/15)

Korean: 45% (18/40)

Other: 67% (2/3)

**Percentage of congregations that send a team to disaster areas to help with clean-up or provide other sorts of assistance to natural disasters or crises, either domestically or worldwide**

Chinese: 0% (0/15)

Korean: 25% (10/40)

Other: 33% (1/3)

**Percentage of congregations that give to needs associated with country of origin, for example, social issues in China and Korea, or with the needs of immigrants from these countries.**

Chinese: 56% (9/14)

Korean: 68% (27/39)

Other: 43% (3/4)

**Percentage of congregations with groups, meetings, and classes:**

- To offer English classes and/or support for immigrants
  - Chinese: 38% (5/13)
  - Korean: 40% (13/32)
  - Other: 50% (2/4)
- To plan or conduct an assessment of community needs
  - Chinese: 54% (7/13)
  - Korean: 55% (18/33)
  - Other: 50% (2/4)
- To travel to another country to provide assistance to people in need
  - Chinese: 36% (5/14)
  - Korean: 87% (33/38)
  - Other: 75% (3/4)

**Amount of money, overall spent on such projects by the congregation, not counting staff time or volunteer time.**

Overall, 45% (26/58) spend more than \$10,000, while 40% (23/58) spend between \$1,000 and \$10,000, and 16% (9/58) spend less than \$1,000.

Primary Ethnicity	Spending on Projects and Programs	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	Less than \$1,000	40% (6/15)
Chinese	Between \$1,000 and \$10,000	26.67% (4/15)
Chinese	More than \$10,000	33.33% (5/15)
Korean	Less than \$1,000	7.69% (3/39)
Korean	Between \$1,000 and \$10,000	46.15% (18/39)
Korean	More than \$10,000	46.15% (18/39)
Other/Unknown	Between \$1,000 and \$10,000	25% (1/4)
Other/Unknown	More than \$10,000	75% (3/4)
<i>Proportions do not include 5 missing answers.</i>		



### Source of funding for these activities

Primary Ethnicity	Funding Source	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	These activities are funded by the congregation in a special offering	42.86% (6/14)
Chinese	These activities are part of the congregation's normal budget	57.14% (8/14)
Korean	Another fundings source (please describe)	5% (2/40)
Korean	These activities are funded by the congregation in a special offering	37.5% (15/40)
Korean	These activities are part of the congregation's normal budget	57.5% (23/40)
Other/Unknown*	These activities are funded by the congregation in a special offering	25% (1/4)
Other/Unknown*	These activities are part of the congregation's normal budget	75% (3/4)
<i>Proportions do not include 6 missing answers.</i>		

\*Other: 예산과 특별헌금 (“Budget and special offerings”), “provided our space”

### Number of people who attend these activities

Primary Ethnicity	Average Activity Attendance	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	Less than half the congregation	78.57% (11/14)
Chinese	Half the congregation	14.29% (2/14)
Chinese	More than half the congregation	7.14% (1/14)
Korean	Less than half the congregation	69.23% (27/39)
Korean	Half the congregation	20.51% (8/39)
Korean	More than half the congregation	10.26% (4/39)
Other/Unknown	Less than half the congregation	75% (3/4)
Other/Unknown	More than half the congregation	25% (1/4)
<i>Proportions do not include 6 missing answers.</i>		

## Qualitative Findings

The following findings were mentioned in both Chinese and Korean interviews.

1. **Justice is a key concept in faith, especially for younger generations.**

**Leaders emphasized the ongoing tensions around key social issues:**

Pastors work to translate biblical teachings into understanding and discussing these issues in a way that builds unity and love in congregations. For example, one pastor frames social justice as biblical justice—that caring for others starts with individual change prompted by the Holy Spirit, and that God is bringing about the redemption of all things. This will not be accomplished ultimately through legislation or social movements, rather through faith ultimately in God.

*“Probably every 2 or 3 years, I do like a 10-week series on some hard questions, honest answers, kind of addressing the skeptical objections to the Christian faith... We do have a lot of intentional engagement at that time where people are inviting their family, friends, college roommates, or whatever it is, to come.”*

**Faithfulness is emphasized for individuals and communities:** The steadfast nature of love and commitment was a common response. Leaders emphasized that their church committed to families in need until a crisis passed, not just one time. Likewise, others mentioned that their church was looked to as an anchor in the community, a place where many knew they could turn for help, and it had been so for decades.

Perhaps contrary to trending notions of justice, leaders focused on personal responsibility. Justice issues were explained as a sense of deep personal responsibility for others’ wellbeing, leading to small efforts and change in communities, which is the most organic and sustainable approach. Pastors cautioned about reaching areas that were far away, while overlooking those close by, because of limited contact and lack of sustainability. One mentioned the ability to look at the faces of those being served on a weekly basis.

*“We want to be a church that people know that we’re here for them. We have things like benevolence where not only church members, where the community can apply and get some financial benefits when they’re in need. We work with a school right across the street.”*

*“We have to be able to look into the faces of the people that we’re serving on a weekly basis, for example, to actually have relational justice.”*

2. **Leaders seek wisdom regarding how much help to give.** Because of the generosity of many churches, there have been times when they have been taken advantage of. Stories were shared about families leaving the church after their physical needs were met. One leader mentioned that he had grown wise over the years, first praying, and then following God’s lead regarding the person seeking help.

Relatedly, leaders mentioned a sense of exhaustion, noting that their emotional and material resources at times became depleted. Outreach, in particular involvement in the lives of troubled families, can be very taxing to the resources of the staff, and can cause leaders to often have difficult conversations. Pastors mentioned that many times they address multiple layers of needs, including relational challenges within families that lead to a lack of resources. Pastors emphasized that caring for mental health difficulties, such as between parents and children, is among the most energy-depleting aspects of their ministry.

Interviewees expressed how it was important for churches to both take care of their own members, often through small groups, and to be authentic witnesses and servants in the community. They mentioned that at times, it was difficult to decide which groups deserved the priority.

*“There are non-believers living near Chinatown who want nothing to do with us. If they are ill and no one is there to help them, we ask if they would like us to help them, such as with prayer and buying groceries for them.”*

*“Right now, what's sad is that I am so administratively busy that I don't have the time to physically . . . People are always coming in and asking for my time and it requires a lot of discipline.”*

- 3. Life groups are a major structure for serving material and spiritual needs, both for those internal and external to the church.** Some churches administer the majority of their church's outreach programs through small groups. Others design specific programs to reach specific needs of people. Within small groups, there is a varying degree of autonomy. Some carry out the programs designed by the central church leadership. Others are open, organized friendship circles as a branch of the church, sometimes resourced with financial and other materials to use according to their discretion in the needs of their community. Those churches with a culture of small group mention that many join the church after first being invited into the smaller community group.

*“Our small group culture is as diverse as the people that are in it.”*

*“I love it. Oftentimes, these are especially with our young people, that's where we get the most visitors. They don't just do your traditional community group in a home where you do Bible study. They do some of that, but oftentimes they're meeting at a bar or some restaurant.”*

**Friendship is key:** Regardless of the model, leaders point to natural, sincere friendships as the key to a healthy culture for reaching out to invite and help others. They describe an attraction to Christianity that is based on being a part of the natural life of Christians, as compared to coming to faith through the formal events of the church.

*“That's the paradigm shift that we're creating through sermons and teachings and team ministries. We're hoping that organic relationships and occupational relationships will become how normal evangelism is done and not by adrenaline-fueled church events because those are costly: uses money and uses time and you can't do aftercare. I think it's a waste of a church's resources.”*

**Professionals-focused Bible study groups serve a key demographic in**

**Washington D.C.:** Christians in certain professions, such as doctors, reach out to others in their circles of influence to organize groups according to their field. Because of these individuals, groups of Christians or those interested in the faith meet during work breaks, such as lunches, to discuss spiritual topics and pray for one another. These groups are supported but not administered by the church, yet some become successful and require more administrative support.

*“Basically, when I was in San Jose, we had a lot of people working, 15 people working at Apple, Google, and LinkedIn. I was like “Don't come to me, let me go to your workplace and we'll worship together, have food.” If you have any friends who are hostile to Christianity, invite them, and let's talk, and let's be salt and light.”*

4. **Mental health is a primary need for church participants and community.**

Congregations consistently commented on a prevalent need among their people for mental health support. Leaders reflected on the times they would care for families, sometimes over extended periods, advising and supporting them as they experienced mental health challenges. This would include visiting in homes, hospitals, psychiatric facilities, and jails. Seeing a member, especially a youth, who has successfully healed from these challenges is seen as a personal success for these leaders. Among the most mentioned themes of this study is the difficulty between parents and children, especially teenagers. Aligned with national trends, Asian teens face special difficulties and challenges with mental health.

Some churches created specific ministries dedicated to helping one another in this way. Others employ a professional counselor on staff to assist individuals and families with their mental and psychological concerns. Still other churches recognize that they may not have all the necessary resources to support the variety of mental and psychological needs present in their congregation and community. Some mentioned collaborating and forming formal partnerships with local mental health providers, to facilitate the help that people need without bearing the responsibility alone. Other churches need leadership training regarding mental health ministries in order to meet the congregation's needs. This training can be more advanced study or could include simple basics of helping with such needs. Leaders emphasized the importance of embedding such ministries within the structures of support that naturally exist in the churches, such as their life with community or small groups.

Discussing mental health problems in these congregations carries a negative stigma. Pastors try to address this through biblical teaching on the subject and speaking openly about their own experiences with mental issues. They suspect these issues are more prevalent than they hear about, but individuals and families may have not discussed it with the church community much before.

Pastors are asked to provide care and counseling for those who are experiencing difficulties with mental health. Some leaders primarily explain the difficulties in spiritual terms, as in being possessed by a demon. Others treat these difficulties as medical conditions. It is a primary concern for leaders how to better help those that are facing such problems. Pastors described some attempts at helping regarding mental health as "blunders" and note that the church staff must recover and learn from those incidents, as well. Finally, the notion of extreme privacy is a barrier to deeper helping relationships. Be it physical or mental needs, there is an Asian cultural resistance to sharing vulnerably with one another; however, in appropriate ways that guards against isolation.

*"Recognizing that need, we had a small group who volunteered to take care of and network with local counselors and mental health people, and workers in that field. We call them Holistic Health Ministry."*

*“There was a mental hospital nearby, and he was sent there. His family called me every day at night. It was their daytime and my midnight. I had to pick up their calls. They were anxious because they had only one son.”*

5. **Congregations care for and are thoughtful about physical spaces and locations.** Interviewees described a sense of God’s building up churches in very specific locations, with many churches growing into maturity according to their specific neighborhoods and areas. Leaders are attuned to the areas around Washington D.C. that are rapidly growing and developing. One pastor mentioned, for example, an area that is becoming “the Manhattan of Northern Virginia” and is currently without Asian American churches.

Churches often care not only for the physical space on the land that they own, but also take a community-wide interest in ensuring that properties are cared for. This included activities such as picking up trash, cleaning streets, repaving shared parking lots, and planting/caring for trees.

**Commuter congregations make community challenging:** Some congregations mentioned that they face challenges serving their community on a regular basis, as many of their members commute from quite a distance. This is often for socio-economic reasons, either members cannot afford to live in the communities where the church building is located, or the church is in a less desirable neighborhood.

**Inspiring sacred spaces:** For some, the location and design and of their facilities was a dual symbol to the community, attesting both to the presence of a faith and an immigrant community, such as in the heart of Chinatown. The more this was true, the more interviewees discussed the building in terms of being a public space, used for rallies, disaster response, missionary conferences, community groups and more causes, beyond the use of the congregation itself.

**Historic congregations become a center of the community:** Churches who have a history within the community are often used as cultural or social centers as well as religious institutions. Because of this status, they receive many requests for help, which these leaders respond to using a variety of discernment tools. Some choose to help in all cases. Others pray and invite the person into ongoing conversation. Still others have funding and resources set aside, and they give as they are able. This support is not only material, but also takes the form of home visits, phone calls, or translation work. Other times, the churches host local government events, community celebrations, or fundraisers for local causes. Finally, these congregations are part of community responses to disasters. They help victims themselves, care for first responders, and help all survivors recover from the trauma of what they experienced.

*“If Chinatown has a fire, which happened about 10 years ago and several houses burned, some members and I went to our church even though it was late at night. We opened our building as a trauma center for medical personnel and the police. We comforted those who needed care at that time. We ministered to them whether they were part of our church community or not.”*

*“We’ve found that we need to be involved as a fixture of the local community. One resident who’s lived here for 70 years said that in the most difficult times, the church was there.”*

**6. Congregations use a variety of methods and partnerships to reach out.**

Some churches did not administer their own outreach programs; rather, they donated to NGO’s or nonprofits in the area who were doing work the church considered missional. Then they encouraged their members to volunteer with these organizations as part of their church commitment. Other churches do support individual families themselves, using a ‘wraparound’ method, which supports families as whole. They do not provide one single service; instead, they act (as one interviewee said) “as mothers,” helping with needs ranging from legal status issues to assisting the sick to giving clothes—anything the church can provide that a family needs to reach stability.

In some denominations, attendees at the church limit a person’s participation in outreach activities until they have been baptized and formally join church membership. Some churches align with this practice, while others reframe a program so that it is not officially outreach and can be more inclusive.

Finally, leaders are looking to transition their churches’ relationships with people who engaged more often during the pandemic when meetings were held in virtual spaces. Without online engagement, some of these people are not attending services or groups in person. Some leaders are taking the initiative to visit these people or take them out to lunch or coffee.

*“It’s sharing the gospel to the Russian immigrants, and these are kids and it’s very dangerous and it’s hard for them and it’s a hot summer.”*

*“God blessed us with Americans who taught us English, why not do the same thing?”*

## **Giving and Finances**

### **Quantitative Findings**

The following section reports on the giving and financial management practices of the congregations based on income congregation received in most recent fiscal year at the time of the survey (2021).

This past year, 50% of congregations (27/54) received \$500,000 or more in total income. 90% received \$100,000 or more in total income. About 27.8% (15/54) received \$1 million or more, while 7.4% (4/54) received less than \$25,000.

Primary Ethnicity	Income Total	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	Between \$5,000 and \$24,999	13.33% (2/15)
Chinese	\$100,000 or more	60% (9/15)
Chinese	\$500,000 or more	20% (3/15)
Chinese	\$1 million or more	6.67% (1/15)
Korean	Less than \$5,000	2.7% (1/37)
Korean	Between \$5,000 and \$24,999	2.7% (1/37)
Korean	\$25,000 or more	2.7% (1/37)
Korean	\$100,000 or more	32.43% (12/37)
Korean	\$500,000 or more	24.32% (9/37)
Korean	\$1 million or more	35.14% (13/37)
Other/Unknown	\$100,000 or more	50% (1/2)
Other/Unknown	\$1 million or more	50% (1/2)
<i>Proportions do not include 9 missing answers.</i>		

### **Congregational income from individuals' donations, dues, or contributions**

74% (40/54) of the congregations surveyed receive 100% of their income from donations, dues, and contributions. We noted a split between congregations labeled as primarily Chinese and congregations labeled as primarily Korean, with 100% (15/15) of Chinese churches receiving 100% of their income from donations, compared to 64.9% (24/37) of Korean churches.

### **Percentages of congregation with endowment, savings account, or other reserve fund**

About 75% (40/53) of all surveyed congregations have an endowment, savings account, or other reserve fund. This holds when considering Chinese and Korean congregations individually.

### **Percent of congregations that met their budget – income same as or exceeding expenses.**

Overall, 83% (44/53) congregations met their budget, while 17% (9/53) either did not meet their budget or did not have a formal written budget.



Primary Ethnicity	Answer	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	Our church does not have a formal, written budget	14.29% (2/14)
Chinese	Yes	85.71% (12/14)
Korean	Our church does not have a formal, written budget	2.7% (1/37)
Korean	No	13.51% (5/37)
Korean	Yes	83.78% (31/37)
Other/Unknown	No	50% (1/2)
Other/Unknown	Yes	50% (1/2)

*Proportions do not include 10 missing answers.*

### Digital platforms available for giving

Primary Ethnicity	Digital Donation Platform	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	None	28.57% (4/14)
Chinese	Fundraising/Crowdfunding Platforms	21.43% (3/14)
Chinese	Others (Please describe)	7.14% (1/14)
Chinese	Website	42.86% (6/14)
Korean	None	11.11% (4/36)
Korean	Church's App	19.44% (7/36)
Korean	Fundraising/Crowdfunding Platforms	16.67% (6/36)
Korean	Others (Please describe)*	8.33% (3/36)
Korean	Website	44.44% (16/36)
Other/Unknown	Church's App	33.33% (1/3)
Other/Unknown	Website	66.67% (2/3)

*Proportions do not include 10 missing answers.*

\*"Other" responses indicated Zelle, Venmo, Tithly, and KakaoTalk Channel

### Qualitative Findings:

The following findings were mentioned in both Chinese and Korean interviews.

1. **Most churches reported financial stability through COVID.** Most churches within this study did not report a financial downturn despite the global pandemic. For some, their finances grew. As churches switched to online services, many also emphasized online giving. Also, the reduction in ministry expenses and federal assistance helped many churches. They are now working to continue the consistency in giving. The steadiness of most giving in these churches is representative of charitable giving during COVID-19 for faith-based nonprofits in the United States. However, one important exception is the giving in congregations whose members owned businesses not covered by the U.S. Government's Paycheck Protection Programs. These groups suffered and were subsequently unable to give at previous levels.

*"Interviewer: Is it enough to run the church?  
It's not enough but we try to spend it well."*

*"And we thought, "What are we supposed to do? There are not many people coming to church." When less people come, there are less donations. This is reality. But miraculously, during the year of pandemic, 2019... or is it 2020... During that time, our church had more than a million dollars of donations."*

**COVID drove innovation in giving.** Congregations are finding multiple ways (both in-person and online) for congregants to give. Notably, leaders did not mention bequests or other types of non-liquid gifts, such as real estate or stock.

*"We're trying to think of what some creative ways are, especially for younger people, they just need a gentle reminder."*

*"At first no one gave tithes. Even pastors didn't. I said during a meeting that we should give tithes. Not everybody gives tithes now, but people give other offerings."*

2. **Capacities to give vary widely.** Many of the churches interviewed mentioned that their population was affluent and highly educated, with a high capacity for giving. Others stated that many of their participants lived on fixed incomes or more modest incomes. These giving capacities reflect the income disparities that exist in the immigrant communities more broadly. While leaders report that for most churches giving levels are healthy, they do recognize that the gifts come from a core, oftentimes aging group of givers. Leaders are working to develop new givers as well.

*"When I prayed, God had given me a word, "Be God's valuable vessel in this wealthy and influential family." You see, we do not have that many people in the church, but we are wealthy and influential."*

3. **Churches are careful stewards regarding budgeting and use of funds.**

**Use of Budgets:** Many churches reported annual budgeting processes. Some expected budgets to grow by a certain percentage each year. As growth patterns of the churches fluctuate, the budgets likewise needed to expand and contract based on the needs of the congregation.

Churches reported vastly different approaches to risk tolerance regarding the use of money, from those who were setting aside a percentage of their income to plant new churches or give money to missions to those that wanted to carefully steward the church's finances in relation to providing food for members.

*"If we're not doing God's work and then we're expecting God's provision, that just doesn't go hand in hand. I think it makes sense that as we are faithfully carrying out God's work that God will provide so that we can be a blessing to others as well."*

4. **Pastors often do not preach or learn about congregants' giving.** Most interviewed pastors stated they didn't often preach on giving. Some stated that their approach to preaching was exegetical, so when giving was mentioned in the Bible passage, they preached about it. Some pastors avoided messages on giving and said when there were messages around giving, giving was framed as part of worship or stewardship. Most do not delve deeply into the theology of giving. In some churches, a special time of giving was designated in the service; for others, it was not. One leader mentioned that their congregation is looking for creative ideas to engage a new generation of members about giving. While pastors do not often preach on giving, they also commented that in times of financial need, they are also careful about preaching on finances to avoid a crisis mentality in the congregation. A few mentioned that such messages have been necessary, but they rarely use the tactic.

Finally, most pastors interviewed do not know about giving levels of individual families in their congregations. In most churches, giving is "a guarded secret" from the pastors, so leaders will not be tempted to show favoritism towards those who give more.

*"I am asking the finance department for data points to see how many of our people tithed, for example. That could turn into a service about generosity or could turn into a service series."*

*"We really try to think of giving or money more as a spiritual matter because it is connected to your heart. I think there's a reason why Jesus shared so many parables about finances and money"*

# Leadership & Governance

## Quantitative Findings

### Leadership arrangement of congregation

Primary Ethnicity	Leadership	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	Other (Please describe)	12.5% (2/16)
Chinese	Senior executive decisions are made by a board of elders or directors, and pastors do not serve on this board.	6.25% (1/16)
Chinese	Senior executive decisions are made by a board of elders or directors, and pastors serve on this board.	62.5% (10/16)
Chinese	The lead pastor makes most executive decisions without the need for board approval.	18.75% (3/16)
Korean	Senior executive decisions are made by a board of elders or directors, and pastors do not serve on this board.	7.5% (3/40)
Korean	Senior executive decisions are made by a board of elders or directors, and pastors serve on this board.	92.5% (37/40)
Other/Unknown	Other (Please describe) *	25% (1/4)
Other/Unknown	Senior executive decisions are made by a board of elders or directors, and pastors serve on this board.	75% (3/4)
<i>Proportions do not include 3 missing answers.</i>		

\*Other:

- Pastors and deacons will negotiate and lead together.
- Pastor, board of trustees, and key coworkers make decisions.

### Head leader born in the United States

None of the surveyed congregations (0/59) have a head leader born in the United States. (Four answers were missing.)

### Number of years head leader served at the church

Overall, 8.47% (5/59) of surveyed congregations have a head leader who has served less than a year, with the same proportion (8.47%, 5/59) serving between 1 and 3 years.

Congregations with leaders who have been serving more than three years to 5 years make up 15.25% (9/59), while 5 years to 10 years makes up 13.56% (8/59). Finally, many these congregations had leaders serving for more than 10 years 54.24% (32/59). Percentages do not include 4 missing answers.

Primary Ethnicity	Duration of Head Leader's Service	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	One month to one year	13.33% (2/15)
Chinese	More than three years to five years	6.67% (1/15)
Chinese	More than five years to 10 years	6.67% (1/15)
Chinese	More than 10 years	73.33% (11/15)
Korean	One month to one year	7.5% (3/40)
Korean	More than one year to three years	12.5% (5/40)
Korean	More than three years to five years	20% (8/40)
Korean	More than five years to 10 years	12.5% (5/40)
Korean	More than 10 years	47.5% (19/40)
Other/Unknown	More than five years to 10 years	50% (2/4)
Other/Unknown	More than 10 years	50% (2/4)
<i>Proportions do not include 4 missing answers.</i>		

### Age of the head leader

Primary Ethnicity	Head Leader's Age	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	41-50 years old	13.33% (2/15)
Chinese	51-60 years old	33.33% (5/15)
Chinese	Older than 60	53.33% (8/15)
Korean	31-40 years old	2.5% (1/40)
Korean	41-50 years old	12.5% (5/40)
Korean	51-60 years old	60% (24/40)
Korean	Older than 60	25% (10/40)
Other/Unknown	41-50 years old	25% (1/4)
Other/Unknown	Older than 60	75% (3/4)
<i>Proportions do not include 4 missing answers.</i>		

## Head leader and theological education

Overall, 86.44% (51/59) of surveyed congregations have a leader with seminary or graduate theological training, with 3.34% (2/59) receiving an undergraduate theological or bible school training. Only 10.17% (6/59) having no formal theological training.

Primary Ethnicity	Head Leader's Theological Education	Proportion of Primary Ethnicity
Chinese	No	26.67% (4/15)
Chinese	Yes, bible college, or undergraduate theological training	6.67% (1/15)
Chinese	Yes, seminary, or graduate theological training	66.67% (10/15)
Korean	No	5% (2/40)
Korean	Yes, bible college, or undergraduate theological training	2.5% (1/40)
Korean	Yes, seminary, or graduate theological training	92.5% (37/40)
Other/Unknown	Yes, seminary, or graduate theological training	100% (4/4)
<i>Proportions do not include 4 missing answers.</i>		

## Qualitative Findings:

### Shared Findings

#### 1. Personal Influence of the Senior Leader:

**Leadership Styles of Church Planters:** Those who successfully begin churches must be able to tolerate risk. Church planting pastors were noted to have a range of personalities: from charismatic, dominant, and influential to a propensity to network. Some were also able to preach bilingually. At times, pastors may be excellent preachers, but benefit from support in the administration of the church.

**Personal sense of faith:** Pastors mentioned their own communion with God and personal habits as something of high value, particularly when facing challenges as a leader. They described the importance of having a clear conscience before God, even when they are pushed to please others first. They also mentioned their appreciation for being recognized as a person who is both a leader and an individual on their own faith journey.

*“First, a pastor should focus on their own spiritual health, spiritual growth, because that is a good example for the congregation. We are misled to believe that we do ministry with the program, with what we do but the best asset of my ministry is the person itself, spirituality, your character, your personality.”*

**Dramatic Conversions:** Leaders who served at Korean and Chinese churches in the Washington D.C. area came from diverse backgrounds. A first set of pastors told stories of dramatic conversion. Their conversions produced visions from God, as though a window was opening into heaven. These leaders either pastored or helped in the church in China before immigrating to the United States, a time that was often followed by disillusionment, loneliness, and great anxiety. Their American Christian counterparts could not understand much of what they were experiencing. Yet, over time, they regained their sense of what God was calling them to do and began to again lead faith groups and churches.

*“At that time, I saw that God is alive, and my spiritual eyes were opened. Before, I was an atheist, and did not believe in the creation of the world. At day, I saw that God created the world. The color of the blue sky became different, the flowers and grass were different, the trees... All became lively.”*

*“Because when I was detained in the Panyu Detention Center in Guangdong, 22 people lived in an area of 15 square meters, in a small cell. It was very crowded. We could only sleep on our side and cannot turn over.”*

**Sense of Calling and Leading from God:** Perhaps the most consistent finding in this section is that pastors and leaders stated that they chose to lead a church because of their calling, or out of a sense of calling. This language is commonly used to describe the decision to pursue a vocation of ministry. However, these pastors used this personal communication as language throughout their decision-making processes as a leader, and in their personal relationship with Him.

**International Experience:** Whether through immigration, missions’ experiences, or living abroad, pastors spoke of their interactions with diverse people and places as an important part of their formation for their current ministry. Leaders commonly have lived in many places and dealt with many types of people and situations, not just their own ethnicities. Los Angeles, Canada, Netherlands, Egypt, and more.

**New Forms and Paradigms:** Perhaps aligned with the above, pastors described their bent toward creativity in ministry, that they were drawn to their current church and the location of D.C. to try out new forms of how to lead a church and new ways of thinking about the kingdom of God.

- 2. Leaders exemplified humility and mentioned ultimate authority of Jesus:** The tensions regarding the power and authority of the senior pastor or leader in a congregation were framed in the context of the lordship of Jesus Christ, with him being the ultimate authority in the church. Leaders described this as a counterbalance of their own authority, particularly as interviewees acknowledged the sin of leaders.

*“If we don’t obey what Jesus said, you will love your neighbor as yourself, then there’s no hope for this church. Because of these factors, it is both a warning and a blessing in disguise. So, when there are heated discussions, or a pastor wants to seize control, we have to ask ourselves, Who is the head of this house? Over the Senior Pastor and over the deacons, is the Lord Jesus Christ. With this reminder, people calm down and listen.”*

**Prayer and Collective Decisions Process:** Pastors recommend coming together to pray over an issue. This does not mean that all decisions are decided collectively or voted on. Some pastors noted that not all voices have equal weight for all decisions. For example, for some decisions, pastors emphasized the importance of seminary training. Yet repeatedly, it was emphasized that the key to peace in decision-making was ongoing conversation, humility, and prayer between members, volunteer leaders, and staff.

*“This is the family of God, the house of God. There is a lot of soothing and encouraging during conflict. I give thanks to God that the elderly are wise and experienced but don’t always feel a need to bring this up.”*

- 3. Collaboration between Korean/Chinese and English Ministries:** Many churches included English ministries in their church programming, yet the ministries varied widely in how they were organized.

**Approaching Autonomy:** Churches with both ministries were sometimes each nearly autonomous (separate in terms of finances, hiring of pastors, board of elders, and most of the programming).

**Interdependent Model:** In more interdependent models, the Korean/Chinese and English congregations may share many of the same ministries, particularly youth groups and children’s programming. Decisions that affect both groups are made by committee members representing both groups. The highest-level executive decisions that affect the congregations (such as major business decisions) are made by a standing committee made up of top-level leaders such as senior pastors (Chinese/Korean and English) and a few elders from both congregations. For example, one congregation employed an English Congregation support committee composed of elders and deacons to facilitate communication between congregations.

*“We are the same church. We’re striving for something called The One Church Model and we’re trying to be people who are respectful of our elders while serving them, while also seeing blind spots that they might have so that the next generation can carry out that role, especially in an English-speaking community.”*



**English Congregation as a program:** Other churches saw the English ministry as an outreach of the main congregation. In those cases, Korean/Chinese-only speaking elders might oversee the English ministry, finances, and major decisions, while hiring practices were overseen by the Korean/Chinese church.

- 4. Eldership and Lay Leaders:** Terms and roles of leadership are being considered by churches as younger generations mature.

**Terms for Elders:** There is a great variety of structure regarding how elders are organized across churches. Some elders, once chosen, are elders for their lifetime and vote on all major decisions. Other elders hold certain terms, usually between two to four years. As a final distinction, in some churches elders can be re-appointed or re-elected indefinitely, while in other churches, there are limits to the time one can serve.

**Cultivating Young Elders:** Younger congregations have developed systems to encourage and train younger leaders to become elders. For example, in one congregation, first-term elders do not vote, but can participate in the meetings and receive mentoring from the pastoral staff. If these elders are nominated for a second term, they can begin to vote, as well.

*“I think the biggest challenge is to really develop the next generation of leaders really help our younger people take ownership of the church.”*

**Differentiating Roles for Elders:** Adding another layer of complexity, the role of cultural elder (a wise older person in the church) can at times be conflated with the role of ministry elder in the church (an official role with certain responsibilities). For example, in some Korean churches, men are considered elders if they have been at the church since its founding. While this is less common now than in the past, in some churches these two roles are conflated.

**Deacon Boards:** Some churches rely on deacons to administer many of the programs of the church, as well as to welcome and care for newcomers. These deacons can be appointed or even ordained. The differences can be attributed to either cultural tradition or denominational practice.

**Lay leaders’ paradigm:** Some leaders mentioned the notion of a senior pastor, with its inherent control and power, was something that they were steering the church away from. Rather, they wanted to develop a model where the entire church is involved in leading one another. Others mentioned they did not have assistant pastors; the senior pastor led the congregation, and lay leaders took charge of individual ministries.

5. **Roles and expectations for pastoral staff:** Churches hold varied expectations for their pastors according to national/local culture, denominations, and traditions of older staff. Regarding time commitments, these include evening visitations and days of work per week, among others. As with many other aspects of church leadership, these commitments of previous generations are being reconsidered to address the needs of the current congregation, both staff and members.

**Common staff roles:** For the churches that are large enough to support them, the following staff roles were commonly mentioned. A senior pastor is the most common position for staff roles. This person is responsible for much of the preaching, as well as executive and strategic planning with the board of elders or deacons, depending on the denomination. The executive pastor is responsible for leading the church's operations. Often, other pastors were interviewed or mentioned, such as those dedicated to discipleship, youth, children, worship, and (less commonly) missions, outreach, or communications. However, it is important to emphasize that churches with 10 or more staff members were the exception, not the majority. Executive pastors are not common in Chinese churches.

**Women and ministry:** Leaders shared a variety of views on women engaged in ministry, from women's full inclusion as church leaders to women leading other women only. Leaders described women as sharp theologians, professionals in other spheres of influence, moms juggling life and ministry, the only Korean female pastor they knew, and members of a board of women, among other descriptions.

*"She is our youth director, and she oversees our theological biblical training arm. She's probably the brightest sharpest theologian I know."*

**Bi-vocational pastors:** Bi-vocational pastors are common in Korean and Chinese churches that are: new, independent, from denominations that affirm bi-vocational service, serve recently arrived immigrants, or have a more entrepreneurial approach to church planting. Many leaders hold full-time jobs as well as pastoring, though some split their time with two part-time roles. In fact, some churches choose to have two or more part-time or volunteer pastoral (and other) staff, rather than one full-time pastor.

## Conclusion

This study of Chinese and Korean churches in the greater Washington D.C. area provides insights into their community engagement, giving, and leadership. While diaspora congregations are seen as vibrant organizations in American Christianity in an era of religious decline, they are simultaneously filled with their own promise and challenge. The study supports the practice of church leadership, providing insights from leaders on the front lines of congregations in the area.

Ethnic congregations organize themselves along an array of many combinations of languages and cultures. They use direct ministries, small groups, and partnerships to reach out to their communities. Asian congregations are known for their traditions of hospitality, and they were generous with one another even through the COVID-19 pandemic. However, giving is not discussed often in these congregations, and givers are concentrated within a smaller, aging population.

Regarding differences, Korean congregations benefit from the Christian heritage of South Korea. They continue to practice fervent prayer and commitment to missions. At times, Korean churches are the social centers of communities, though this is changing rapidly.

Chinese congregations have the challenge and opportunity to bring together a vastly diverse group of people as represented by their homeland. Many of their first-generation leaders experienced extreme challenges and dramatic conversions before coming to the United States.

Church leaders are consistently challenged to translate the truth of the gospel into the vernacular of our day, to pass their faith onto younger generations, and to wisely care for the mental health challenges in their communities.

## **Recommendations**

According to the findings from the literature review and data from leaders of Chinese and Korean churches in the Washington D.C. area, staff and lay leaders of congregations should:

1. Be keen observers of how language and culture are influencing relationships at the church. Encourage the development of cultural intelligence that can help others bond deeply and bridge generational and cultural differences.
2. Create or participate in an intentional system that identifies and grows young leaders as a key priority of the church.
3. Carefully consider if their location and facilities hinder or help their calling to a specific community of people.
4. Provide regular opportunities and biblical guidance for members to demonstrate love to one another across generations.
5. Develop a shared understanding of biblical mercy and justice, translating those concepts into modern terms which members can use in conversations and small groups, to build unity around otherwise divisive topics.

6. Steward and grow partners in the gospel and service locally, domestically, and internationally. Some partners will share the Christian faith, and others will share in the mission to help the community.
7. Gain understanding of the deep, broad impact of mental health issues, especially among youth. Set up systems of support that draw from evidence-based practices and biblical teaching.
8. Discuss the spiritual aspects of generosity on a regular basis. Encourage all members to grow to love giving as part of their spiritual disciplines.
9. Consider how those who are most gifted with generosity are being disciplined by the church. Do they have enough theological resources and spiritual support to excel in the grace of giving?
10. Meaningfully engage in a broader faith network beyond the local congregation.
11. For pastors and staff, make friends with other pastors in similar contexts with whom they regularly meet, to encourage one another and share ideas.
12. Invite and support women to grow in their giftedness in service to God's kingdom. While being respectful of theology and culture, provide creative avenues for women to thrive in areas where they were previously excluded and desire to contribute.
13. For churches that are thriving, consider how to include and support other immigrant congregations of the greater Washington D.C.

## Recommended Resources

The following are a small selection of many quality resources available for Chinese and Korean Christian leaders.

### Leadership Resources:

1. Tenx10 Project <https://www.tenx10.org/> - This project creates resources specifically for youth leaders discipling racially diverse communities of youth.
2. Spiritual First Aid <https://www.spiritualfirstaid.org/> - This curriculum teaches staff and lay leaders' evidence and biblically-informed basics to help others with mental health needs.

3. Mental Health Summit - <https://www.churchmentalhealthsummit.com/> This conference equips local churches to support mental health in their communities, congregations, and leaders.
4. Nation, H., & Liu, S. (2022). *Faith in the Wilderness: Words of Exhortation from the Chinese Church*. Lexham Press.

This collection of nine sermons from urban house church pastors in China offers courage for Asian churches across the world.

### Academic Resources:

5. Lee, D. D. (2022). *Doing Asian American Theology: A Contextual Framework for Faith and Practice*. InterVarsity Press.

This book connects Asian American identity to faith and theology, as well as providing a method for theologies in their ethnic, generational, and regional differences.

6. Fulton, B. R., & King, D. P. (2018). National Study of Congregations' Economic Practices: *Bloomington: Indiana University*. Accessed at: [www.nscep.org](http://www.nscep.org)  
This study provides a U.S. nationally representative overview of how congregations receive, manage, and spend their financial resources.

7. Edwards, K.R. and Kim, R. (Forthcoming) *Estranged Pioneers: Race, Faith, and Leadership in a Diverse World*. New York: Oxford University Press.  
This book draws from 121 in-depth interviews to understand what it means for African American and Asian American pastors to head multiracial churches.

8. "The Asian American Movement and the Church," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 25:1 (February 2022): 63-95.

This article considers the social activism of Protestant Christians at the time of the Asian American Movement of the late 1960s.

9. Warner, S., & Wittner, J. G. (Eds.). (1998). *Gatherings in diaspora: Religious communities and the new immigration*. Temple University Press.

Considered a classic in religious studies literature, this book includes chapters on both Korean and Chinese experiences.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> From this set of surveys, we have 16 congregations identified as primarily Chinese in their ethnic makeup, 40 identified as primarily Korean, and 7 churches that are primarily made up of another ethnic group, a mix of groups, or no demographic information was given by the survey taker. Of the completed surveys, 30 were completed by a head pastor or senior pastor, 23 by an associate pastor or other staff member, 3 by an elder or member of the board of elders, and 7 by another volunteer. Because of the small sample size, these statistics should be considered descriptive.

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Each section contains highlights from a selection of the data, described in charts and in words. Please note that all percentages or proportions do not include missing answers, unless specified. This is why the fraction denominator may change from question to question. The number of missing values removed is specified at the bottom of each table. If the reader is interested in other information not highlighted, the section ends with a list of all the questions from that category, including the variable name used in the data set.

A separate document was created that describes the data processing methods, as well as showing our code. That document also describes our approach for identifying each of the congregations by primary ethnicity. Here we simply create summaries of the different variables and describe the results.

<sup>ii</sup> The outer D.C. region is a popular residential location, not just for Koreans, but for Chinese as well. Forty-two percent of newcomers are from Asia, with 12.1% from China and 9.8% from Korea. Thirty-seven-point six percent of Asians in this region live in affluent Fairfax County, VA while 27.9% of Asians reside in Montgomery County, MD (Friedman et al., 2005). Latest population estimates are that Asians comprise 15.6% of the 1,062,061 residents in Montgomery County while accounting for 20.1% of the 1,150,309 inhabitants in Fairfax County (*U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts*, n.d.). Breaking these statistics down further, in Montgomery County there are 298,439 Chinese residents (28.1%) and 119,951 Korean residents (11.2%) (*2020 - 2030 Asian American Health Initiative*, 2021) In Fairfax County, 24,513 (22.7%) of its inhabitants are from China and 28,572 (26.4%) from Korea ("Our Immigrant Neighbors | Demographics", 2019; "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Montgomery County, Maryland; Fairfax County, Virginia", 2021). More than 60% of all Koreans in Virginia live in this one county (Woolsey, 2018). Noting the difference between those living in Virginia versus in Maryland, Professor Larry Shinagawa at the University of Maryland says, "Maryland is different in that [Koreans] ... tend to be in government, science, or banking or law. They tend to be more dispersed but also tend to be much more highly educated" (<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/author/liz-farmer>, 2011, par.11). The median household income in Fairfax County is \$127,866. For Montgomery County it is \$111,812 ("U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Montgomery County, Maryland; Fairfax County, Virginia", 2021). Both numbers are well above the national median, reflecting a successful and upwardly mobile populace.

<sup>iii</sup> The kcmusa.org, a Christian media site, reported a lesser number at over 3,500 churches in 2020. In his study which is referenced below, John Oh splits the difference between these two figures and estimates the number of Korean churches today to be around 4,000 (Oh, J., 2021).

<sup>iv</sup> (In comparison, while accurate data for mainland China is unavailable, 7.87% of the population in Hong Kong identify as Catholic and only 5.87% as Protestant (*National Profiles | World Religion*, n.d.). The percentage of immigrants coming with a background in Christianity and previous interaction with church life clearly favors Koreans over the Chinese.

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