

# Phase 3 Report

## Roadmap for the Future

Action	Reason	Responsible Party	Suggested Time Period
<b>1. Spread the vision</b>	Help understand why and how to stay together	TAT/Board	Short term (1-2 years) and beyond
<b>2. Establish interim preaching</b>	Improve short-term shepherding	Board/pastors	Short term (1-2 years)
<b>3. Get language pastors and an administrative pastor</b>	Improve long-term shepherding and outreach (language pastors); improve coordination (administrative pastor)	Search committee (Board)	Short term (1-2 years)
<b>4. Revise the constitution, bylaws, and other policies</b>	Formalize what we believe and how we operate	Board	Short term (1-2 years) and beyond
<b>5. Raise and install elders</b>	Reflect Biblical patterns and increase church health	Pastors (Board)	Medium term (2-5 years) and beyond
<b>6. Consider adding another name for the English ministry</b>	Signal that non-Chinese people are welcome and that the church centers on the gospel, not Chineseness	Board	Long term
<b>7. Move facilities (or make another change to allow further growth)</b>	Allow more room for outreach and long-term growth	Board	Long term

## Step 1: Spread the vision

### Why do we need a common vision?

If we don't have a common vision, the three congregations won't stay together. We'll see each other as burdens to tolerate—not people for whom to sacrifice, for the sake of the gospel.

And if the three congregations separate, the next generation will inherit our problems. The Cantonese and Mandarin congregations will struggle in making disciples of their own children now, and the same problems will arise in the next generation. An English congregation will grow up out of the youth group, and the same questions and tensions that haunt us today will haunt them tomorrow.

But if we can forge a healthy structure that will allow all congregations to thrive together, maybe we can serve the gospel today *and* our children tomorrow. If we can forge a healthy structure, maybe we won't need another Transition/Assessment Team in five years.

So we should ask: How can we *all* thrive? How can we serve the gospel today and our children tomorrow? How can our vision thrive?

### What is our common vision?

The vision is to make disciples in the Sacramento area and beyond. We want to reach *all nations*, including those who speak Cantonese, English, and Mandarin. And we do this best when we do two things: 1) have unity without uniformity and 2) partner together.

### What would this look like?

The Cantonese and Mandarin congregations let us make disciples in the Sacramento area and beyond, focusing on Chinese-speaking immigrant communities. And the English congregation partners with them in helping teach and train their children, and allowing immigrant families to remain together as a family in church and community.

The English congregation lets us make disciples in the Sacramento area and beyond—for both Chinese and non-Chinese communities. And the Cantonese and Mandarin congregations partner with them by allowing them the freedom to do this. In this way, the English congregation directly partners in the Chinese-speaking congregations' vision, but can also reach out to a multi-ethnic community.

The Cantonese and Mandarin congregations shouldn't resent the English congregation; instead, they should love the English congregation. The English congregation doesn't have to stay at CGBC. In many ways, church would be easier without having three congregations; there wouldn't be as many disagreements, and things could move faster. But the English congregation stays out of love of the Cantonese and Mandarin congregations—to help in practical ways, like sharing children's ministry, youth ministry, and finances.

And the English congregation shouldn't resent the Cantonese and Mandarin congregations; instead, they should love these congregations. What better way could there be to help reach the Chinese immigrant population in Sacramento and beyond? And what a blessing these congregations are to the English congregation! They have helped provide the building and financial security all of us enjoy, and they continue to provide much of the youth group and the emerging leaders who arise there.

## Step 2: Establish interim preaching

We're thankful for how much our current pastors love and labor for us. But we recognize that they have human limitations, and they're being stretched beyond the reasons they were initially brought to CGBC. This is too much for two people to carry.

Instead, we'd suggest that the current preaching be supplemented until we get language pastors. We could do this through getting interim preaching pastors for all three congregations. These could be pastors who are hired on only a short-term basis. The current preaching could also be supplemented by guest speakers and lay preachers, but interim preaching pastors might be able to give more consistent feeding.

This might better serve current needs, free our current pastors to shepherd in other areas, and prevent our people from becoming impatient and anxious during a potentially lengthy pastoral search process.

## Step 3: Get language pastors and an administrative pastor

### Why language pastors?

We need to hear the gospel in our own language (Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 14:11). Our language is not “of first importance,” but it is necessary so we can hear the gospel that is “of first importance” (1 Corinthians 15:3). We should embrace this, not run from it.

These language pastors should be skilled at preaching the Bible. The Bible is necessary for us to be saved (Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23) and to grow as Christians (Matthew 4:4; Acts 20:32). So Paul tells Timothy, “Preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2). Thus, they may be skilled and useful in other areas, but above all, they must preach the Word clearly and well.

### Why an administrative pastor (and not a “senior pastor”)?

Some advocate for having a senior pastor at CGBC to help the congregations coordinate and partner together well. This might have three facets:

1. **Coordinate the elders/pastors**  
This person would hire and fire other pastors, and mediate conflicts between staff.
2. **Coordinate all-church responsibilities**  
This person would oversee the building, coordinate services, etc.
3. **Vision**  
This person would provide vision for the three congregations.

However, others have voiced concerns over having a “senior pastor”:

1. **Power**  
Is it biblical/healthy for one man to be able to singlehandedly hire and fire other pastors?
2. **Language**  
Are we looking for a “unicorn”? And if we don’t get a “unicorn” (who is the perfect fit in language, philosophy, and culture), we hinder which pastors will come.
3. **Title**  
We’re not looking for a “senior pastor” as traditionally defined (someone who is the primary preacher/shepherd for any congregation). Instead, the language pastors will do this.

How can we get the advantages of a senior pastor without the disadvantages? An “administrative pastor” could do this.<sup>1</sup> He could help the congregations partner together by coordinating the pastors and elders and by shepherding all-church ministries (e.g., children’s ministry, youth ministry, facility usage, etc.). But unlike the senior pastor, he would not hire/fire pastors by himself, and he would not set the vision of the church by himself. Instead, he might participate in this with the other elders.

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<sup>1</sup> Alternately, there might be other ways to accomplish this.

## Step 4: Revise the constitution, bylaws, and other policies

Our constitution and bylaws are like highway guardrails.

In some ways, our constitution, bylaws, and policies are like guardrails on the highway. We don't usually pay much attention to them, but in times of danger, they protect us and help us live together harmoniously.

So we should revise our constitution, bylaws, and other policies. This way, we can reflect and formalize what we believe and how we will operate.

### Constitution and bylaws changes

Revisions to the constitution and bylaws would include the following:

- Ensuring that the Statement of Faith reflects all of our “die for” and “divide over” issues without requiring “debate over” and “don't care” issues
- Removing the senior pastor role from the bylaws
- Setting up the structure in the bylaws for (eventual) elder governance

### When?

We shouldn't rush this and change this at the January 2018 Annual Business Meeting. Instead, we might call a special business meeting, after we've had time to communicate and plan.

### How do policies fit?

The constitution and bylaws give us unity in shared areas of belief, administration, and ministry. And we should eventually also clarify policies in areas of shared administration and ministry (e.g., building usage, hiring practices, children's ministry, and youth ministry). We want unity in these shared areas of belief, administration, and ministry.

At the same time, we want to allow for freedom in unshared areas of belief, administration, and ministry. For example, one congregation might allow women to teach a co-ed adult Sunday School, and another might not. One congregation might want to spend more money on outreach, and another congregation might want to spend more money on Sunday School materials. One congregation might try to reach mainly Chinese people, and another congregation might try to reach Chinese people and non-Chinese people. And these differences need not break our unity.

We can have unity in significant areas of shared belief, administration, and ministry. But at the same time, we can also allow for significant freedom in unshared areas of belief, administration, and ministry.

## Step 5: Raise and install elders

### Why elders?

In the New Testament, churches are governed by multiple elders (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). This benefits the leadership, since it gives the leadership more wisdom and talent. It also benefits the church, since it gives the church more shepherding.

This may be new for some of us. But in the Bible, God speaks for our good. So if we want our good, let's lean in to what the Bible says.

### How might we raise and install elders?

The transition might look like this:

Element	Description	Rough Timeframe
<b>Pray</b>	The church <i>prays</i> for God's will in its leadership.	Years 1-5
<b>Process</b>	The leaders <i>process</i> what the Bible has to say about eldership.	Year 1
<b>Plan</b>	The leaders <i>plan</i> how to make the transition.	Year 2
<b>Preach</b>	After gaining trust, the pastors <i>preach</i> what the Bible says about eldership (with plenty of time for feedback/questions).	Year 3
<b>Practice</b>	The church begins to <i>practice</i> this.	Years 4-5

### Why so slow?

It may take several years to transition to elder governance. This is partly because our church needs time to grow together in its understanding, and partly because we need time to grow and train potential elders.

This transition may seem unreasonably slow to some. But the church is more like a large cruise ship than like a speed boat, and if we make too many quick turns as if we're in a speed boat, some people will be thrown over.

We don't just want change. We want to care for people.

It's wiser to move slowly and patiently. And it's more important to develop godly, gifted leaders than to rush immature men into place.

## Step 6: Consider adding another name for the English ministry

### Why keep the current name for the Cantonese and Mandarin congregations?

The name “Chinese Grace Bible Church” is a special name. It communicates our heart to reach immigrants, and it makes it easier for immigrants to find us. In this way, it’s served the gospel well for over 45 years. Chinese-speaking people need the gospel in Chinese, and this name communicates this well.

### Why add a name for the English congregation?

The word “Chinese” helps us reach Chinese immigrants, but it can hinder the English congregation from reaching non-Chinese friends and neighbors. It can make them ask, “Am I welcome there?”

More subtly, the word “Chinese” can form our identity in ways that compete with the gospel. We can start to come for the gospel and Chinese culture, not just the gospel. We can think, “We mostly just want to reach out to Chinese people and be with Chinese people.” We can form our community to look more like us and less like those Jesus bought from every tribe and language and people and nation (Revelation 5:9-10). We can make “Chinese” jokes that quietly exclude non-Chinese people. We can unconsciously train our children to associate only with other Chinese people. And we can be tempted to ignore parts of the Bible that don’t mesh with Chinese culture as well. Adding a name won’t change our culture or mindset overnight. But it can help.

Those of us who are ethnically Chinese love our heritage. But we love the gospel even more.

## Step 7: Move facilities (or make another change to allow further growth)

### A legacy of faith

From 1970-1980, godly, gutsy men and women saved and sacrificed to build our current facilities. And these facilities have served the gospel well for years. We can see this in the sinners converted here, sermons preached here, men and women baptized here, children instructed here, and friendships formed here. We have decades of memories here.

### A problem for the future

But we have a problem. We don't have enough room to welcome newcomers or sustain long-term growth. Church consultants recommend one acre of land per every 100-125 people on site, but we have under two acres of land for approximately 700 people. This has naturally bred tensions in the past, and it will continue to hinder us if left unaddressed.

Perhaps the best long-term solution would be to move to a larger facility. This would allow more room for growth, outreach, and events. It could reduce fighting over limited space. And it could allow services to occur at the same time, so they wouldn't have to be as rushed.

Other solutions could include moving service times, adding service times, planting other churches, and remodeling our current facilities. But these would all have additional complications.

### A future of faith?

Regardless, we should prepare to show the same kind of gutsy, sacrificial faith that our church mothers and fathers showed in the 1970's. By imitating them, we may serve a new generation with the gospel.



## A Vision for the Future

### The Reunion

“It’s so good to see you again!” Martin gives me a smothering hug, and I smother back. *I can’t believe it’s been 10 years since I was here. And God has been so good to each of us.* “Well, get in!” he shouts, walking to the driver’s seat. I get in.

As he drives, we sip our coffee and catch up—what has he been up to? How has serving in the church been? How are our friends? Did you hear about Jessica’s kids? Or Shirley’s parents? Or Vince’s job?

### New Location

After a few minutes, he gets off the freeway. “I’m so glad that you’re coming back to CGBC. I’m curious about what you’ll think.”

“I can’t wait,” I say.

“A few things have changed around here,” he comments.

And where *is* here? When I moved away from Sacramento 10 years ago, the church was in the Greenhaven/Pocket area. But I don’t recognize this neighborhood.

“This might be a stupid question, but...did we move?”

He laughs. “Yeah, a few years after you left, the elders recommended moving and getting a bigger place, since we were outgrowing our old space. Actually, we’d outgrown our old space for years and years, but we could never bring ourselves to move. But then we realized that we could reach more people and fight less about space if we moved. Some of us were really attached to the old location, since so many of our founders had worked and prayed so much for that old location. But after a while, people caught the vision and began to work and pray to serve the future, not just enshrine the past.”

“Wow. That’s pretty cool.”

“Yeah, people have really come to appreciate it. Now our visitors can find parking. And we can have services at the same time, instead of rushing services and getting upset with each other if one service goes long.”

We park. And he’s right—there *are* plenty of parking spaces.

### New Name, New Mindset

We walk in and find seats just as the service starts. “Welcome to Community Bible Church, a ministry of and to Chinese Grace Bible Church,” the pastor is saying.

As the pastor reads from Psalm 27, I tug at Martin. “Wait, what did he say?”

He smiles and whispers back, “Let’s talk after service.”

After service, Martin explains, “A few years ago, they rebranded the English ministry as ‘Community Bible Church.’ That’s because they realized that the name ‘Chinese Grace Bible Church’ made it more difficult to reach their non-Chinese friends and co-workers. They were also afraid that the

word ‘Chinese’ could subconsciously encourage people to come for the Chinese culture, not for Jesus. And they’ve tried to reshape the culture. For example, we don’t make ‘Asian’ jokes that would make non-Asians feel left out.”

“Woah. That’s huge. And I think I notice some more non-Asian faces than I saw last time I was here.”

“Yeah, there are a few,” he nods. “It’s great to see people inviting their friends. And it’s great that they feel welcome here.”

“That’s great! But why did the pastor say, ‘a ministry of and to Chinese Grace Bible Church’?”

“It’s because a huge reason why the English congregation is here is to serve the Cantonese and Mandarin congregations. The English congregation wants to serve and reach people of *all* ethnicities—and that includes the children of the Cantonese and Mandarin congregations. And so the pastors emphasize that the English are here to serve the Cantonese and Mandarin congregations.

“The Cantonese and Mandarin congregations realized that the English congregation doesn’t need to stay here, but it stays to serve them. And the Cantonese and Mandarin congregations saw that they should allow the English freedom to minister independently. So they’re okay with the English congregation using a different name, and having a greater emphasis on reaching our neighbors. Some of them took it hard at first, but over time, they saw the need, and their hearts changed.”

“When I left, some people were asking why the three congregations were even together,” I say. “We were slowing each other down and getting in each other’s way.”

“That’s true,” Martin admits. “But if we had separated, we would have just kicked the problems down the road another 20 years. The Cantonese and Mandarin congregations would have the same problems 20 years from now, when another English congregation would arise. So we thought it would serve people better to fix it now, instead of just delaying the problem.”

“That sounds great.”

“Yeah, for a while we said we existed as a church to make disciples, but we didn’t see how each congregation contributed to that. It made a big difference when people realized that. It didn’t change *what* we did as much as *why* we did it. I felt like it changed the *feel* of the place, somehow. We began to see each other not as burdens to be tolerated but as people to sacrifice for.”

## New Leaders

“Wow, you weren’t kidding. Things really *have* changed around here,” I say.

“Yeah, you’ve seen some of the big changes—the building, the name, the mindset,” Martin comments. “But one of the biggest blessings has been the new leaders.”

“Like the pastors? You know, I really enjoyed today’s message. It’s so good to hear such a clear, gospel-centered message, straight from the Bible. This might sound cheesy, but I could actually *feel* my heart burning with love for Jesus.”

“Yeah, our pastors really have been a blessing. We’re really thankful for the way they’ve been expositing the text and feeding us, and that’s one of the main reasons we’ve been growing lately.”

“That’s wonderful to hear.”

“Yeah, and that’s not all that I was talking about,” Martin continues. “I was also talking about our elders. We trained them for a few years, and then we installed them and transitioned to elder governance. It took them a while to get used to it, and it took us a while to get used to them. But I think they’ve grown in their wisdom and their shepherding skills over the years. And now we’re really thankful for these men who shepherd us and teach the Bible and lead us. The pastors seem pretty thankful for them, too.”

And as we walk out of the church, I think, *I could belong to a place like this. I could sacrifice for a place like this. And I could invite others to love and sacrifice with me, too.*

## The End

Our church has a full history of gospel proclamation; we want to see a future of continuing, increased gospel health.

We want to see a church culture driven by the Word. We want to see a people who know and love the gospel deeply. We want to see a church that makes disciples, not just administrators.

We want to see a people who are held together by the mission of the Word, not by tradition or potlucks. We want to see a people who love each other deeply, across a dizzying manner of demographic divides. We want to see rich, Word-driven relationships and conversations.

We want to see Biblical elders who shepherd the flock by the Word, not shrinking from declaring the whole counsel of God. We want to see a norm of vigorous expositional preaching.

We fear capitulation to the culture. We fear apathy and inwardness.

We want to see a church that is never “relevant” enough to compromise—a church that feels *in its bones* that Christ’s Church is a pillar and buttress of the truth. We want to see a church that is willing to be labelled “intolerant” for the sake of truth and love.

We want to see a people who carry the Word eagerly, winsomely, and wisely to the outside world, even if that world crucifies them, like it did their Lord.

We would love to be a part of that future.

And we would love you to be a part of that future, too.