

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 1, 2017

Tenet #1: Language-Based Preaching & Shepherding

Can a congregation's language pastor or elder preach/teach in the other language congregations on occasion?

Yes. The TAT model does not require or forbid a language pastor/elder to teach in another language congregation. On occasion, this may be helpful, but it is not required.

One of the main hopes for Tenet #1 is to ensure that each language congregation is cared for through sound teaching and shepherding in their own heart language.

How is the TAT model different than the "Pre-2011" model?

The TAT model and the "Pre-2011" model are similar in that both emphasize the importance of language-based preaching and shepherding (Tenet #1) and of congregations partnering together (Tenet #4).

However, the "Pre-2011" model did not actively emphasize the importance of leadership from a plurality of elders (Tenet #2) and unity without uniformity (Tenet #3). The TAT model sees these as key elements for a healthier church structure.

Tenet #2: Plurality of Elders

Will there be a timeline to call elders or a required number of elders from each congregation?

No. Being an elder is a high calling, and the church should not take it lightly. Requiring a certain timeline to call elders or a certain number of elders from each congregation misses the heart and purpose of having elders in the church.

Instead, we want to be patient, prayerful, and wise in the process of identifying and calling elders from our church. This may mean that the language congregations have no elders for some time, and this is okay. It is not a race or contest. The hope for Tenet #2 is that our church grows towards a healthier and more biblical model of leadership.

How do we ensure that each language congregation raises godly and qualified elders?

We want to be patient, prayerful, and wise in identifying and calling elders from our church. This requires sound teaching in each language congregation about eldership, prayerfully considering whether there are elder-qualified men (or potential elder-qualified men), and training potential future elder-qualified men.

How do we ensure the role of elders in each language congregation does not become politicized and wrongly used?

We want to be patient, prayerful, and wise in the process of identifying and calling elders from our church, so that we can eventually have godly elders. The TAT model provides helpful guardrails to protect against sin, but is not a guarantee that sin will never threaten godly endeavors.

On a broad level, the TAT model helps to protect against politicizing the role of elders in each language by

1. Ensuring that each language congregation's elders' primarily shepherd and care for their own language congregation
2. Limiting the areas where the language elders' roles overlap to the "die for" and "divide over" issues, and some other significant all-church matters

This helps to ensure that the elders from each language congregation in our church are unified in their beliefs and vision, while allowing each language congregation to have diversity of ministry principles to meet specific congregational needs. Requiring uniformity outside of the "die for" and "divide over" issues places unnecessary and potentially divisive tension on the elders from each language congregation.

For example, it would be important for our elders to agree on the doctrine of the Trinity and for this teaching to be consistent across the language congregations. However, it is unnecessary and potentially divisive to require the elders across all the language congregations to agree and be uniform in the style of worship or evangelism.

What is the role and authority of the elders from each congregation when they function together as one over the entire church?

The elders from each language congregation would serve over the whole church primarily in matters involving the “die for” and “divide over” issues and some of the more significant all-church matters. This would include, but is not necessarily limited to, the Constitution and Bylaws, the Statement of Faith, some church policies, some building/facilities issues, and finances.

The language congregations would be free to exercise greater discretion and freedom on issues that fall outside of the “die for” and “divide over” issues to better meet the specific needs of each language congregation.

Will the church be more “elder-led” or more “elder-ruled”?

This is a Phase 3 question and has not been fully discussed in Phase 2. The TAT model does not require or forbid either “elder-led” or “elder-ruled” models.

Will elders serve for life, or will they serve limited terms?

This is a Phase 3 question and has not been fully discussed in Phase 2.

How will the elders be called? By leadership? By congregational vote (by each language congregation, or by all language congregations as one)?

This is a Phase 3 question and has not been fully discussed in Phase 2.

Tenet #3: Unity without Uniformity

How will the church determine what are “die for” and “divide over” issues in comparison to “debate over” and “don’t care” issues?

Generally, “die for” issues are those relating to the core tenets of the Christian faith that distinguish whether one is a Christian or not (e.g., the Gospel, Trinity, etc.).

“Divide over” issues are of significant importance to the church and may impact whether the church can be effective as one body. But they do not distinguish whether one is a Christian or not (e.g., the practice of charismatic gifts, women preaching, etc.).

There are many helpful resources publicly available to help guide our church in the area of determining whether an issue is a “divide over” or “debate over” issue, such as <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/2010/03/17/how-do-you-evaluate-and-weigh-the-importance-of-various-doctrines/>

What are some specific examples of where the language congregations will be “uniform,” and some where the language congregations can practice separately?

Our church will be “uniform” in our Statement of Faith and Constitution.

Some specific examples of areas where each language congregation can have diversity and practice separately include worship style (e.g., hymns vs. more contemporary music) and types of outreach events.

How do we help ensure the unity of the elders of each language congregation when they serve together collectively over the whole church?

One of the hopes of Tenet #3 is that our church will have meaningful and genuine unity in what matters the most—our beliefs and vision—without requiring uniformity in areas that may be unnecessarily divisive. Requiring uniformity in areas outside of the “die for” and “divide over” issues could place unnecessary and divisive tension on the elders from each language congregation.

For example, it would be important for our elders to agree on the doctrine of the Trinity and for this teaching to be consistent across the language congregations. However, worship style and evangelism style are not of first importance, and requiring uniformity here could be unnecessarily divisive.

Therefore, most fundamentally, our elders should be unified in their beliefs and vision.

Practically, there are several ways we can encourage the unity of the elders from each language congregation when they serve collectively over the whole church, such as regular meetings, meals, biannual retreats, and joint training opportunities.

Will we have three separate memberships or one membership comprised of all three language congregations?

This is a Phase 3 question and has not been fully discussed in Phase 2. The TAT model does not require or forbid the church from having one membership body or three separate membership bodies.

Tenet #4: Partnering Together

The model discusses “Unity in Vision.” What is the vision, and how can the 3 language congregations practically partner in this?

The vision is broadly to make disciples in the Sacramento area and beyond, with a unique ability to make disciples in the Chinese-speaking immigrant community because of the Mandarin and Cantonese speaking congregations. For example, the English congregation would partner with the Mandarin and Cantonese in that vision by helping teach and train their children, and allowing immigrant families to remain together as a family in church and community.

While the Chinese-speaking congregations’ vision would be primarily to reach the Chinese-speaking community, the vision of the English congregation would be to also make disciples in the Sacramento area and beyond, regardless of ethnicity. This is only possible if the English congregation is allowed greater freedom and diversity. (This is supported by the TAT model’s emphasis on unity vs. uniformity, the priority of language-based preaching and shepherding, etc.). Therefore, the English congregation will directly partner in the Chinese-speaking congregations’ vision, but will also be able to reach out to a multi-ethnic community.

Miscellaneous

Will we have a Senior Pastor?

The TAT will discuss this seriously in Phase 3, but the team hasn't fully discussed this during Phase 2.

The TAT model does not inherently require or forbid having a Senior Pastor.

Will we have an Administrative Pastor?

The TAT will discuss this seriously in Phase 3, but the team hasn't fully discussed this during Phase 2.

The TAT model does not inherently require or forbid having an Administrative Pastor.