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ASIAN AMERICAN CHURCHES: AN INTRODUCTORY SURVEY

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by DJ Chuang



FOUNDATION

Of the 300,000 Protestant churches in the United States, an estimated 7,000 churches have a majority attendance of Asians. This study obtained emails through internet-based searches and invited 190 churches to participate in this survey, with a response rate of 46%. Although the survey group is not a random sample, its findings will certainly go a long way toward helping identify the distinctive characteristics and top issues among Asian-American churches.



Signs like this symbolize many issues faced by Asian American churches, such as the challenge of ministering both to first generation (Korean language) and second generation (English language) Asians.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SURVEY FINDINGS

Of churches surveyed:

- **Asian American churches are diversifying ethnically**
34% are comprised of significantly more than one Asian ethnic group; 79% have at least 10% non-Asians in attendance
- **Church sizes are widely varied**
51% of churches have less than 250 in attendance, 12% have more than 1,000 in attendance (total people present on a typical weekend)
- **Reaching multiple generations**
42% have at least 50% first generation Asians, 59% have at least 50% second generation Asians
- **Active church planting to reach more people**
61% are planning to launch new churches, 31% have already launched new churches
- **Missionary zeal is evident**
84% send out short-term mission teams, 74% financially support missionaries, 61% send out career missionaries

TOP MINISTRY AREAS

(self-rated as excellent, based on 10 options listed)

Top Ministry Areas (Composite)

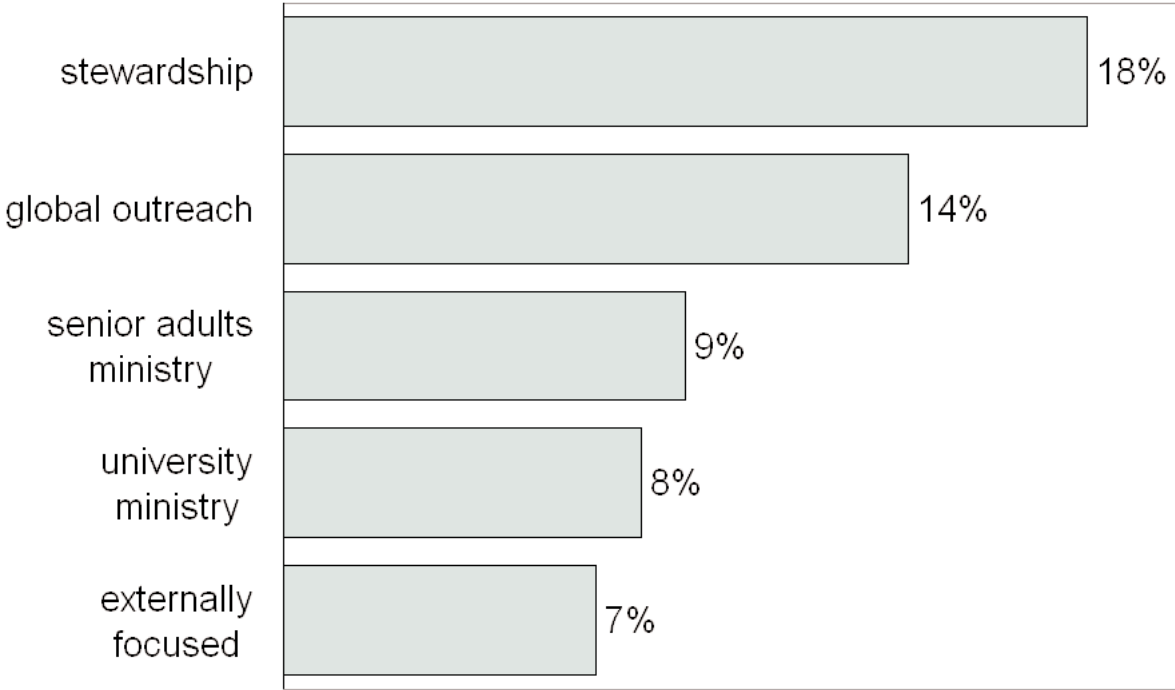


photo credit: www.jamanewawakening.com

Thousands of next generation Asian Americans worshipping God at the JAMA New Awakening 2006 Conference in Anaheim, California (August 2006).

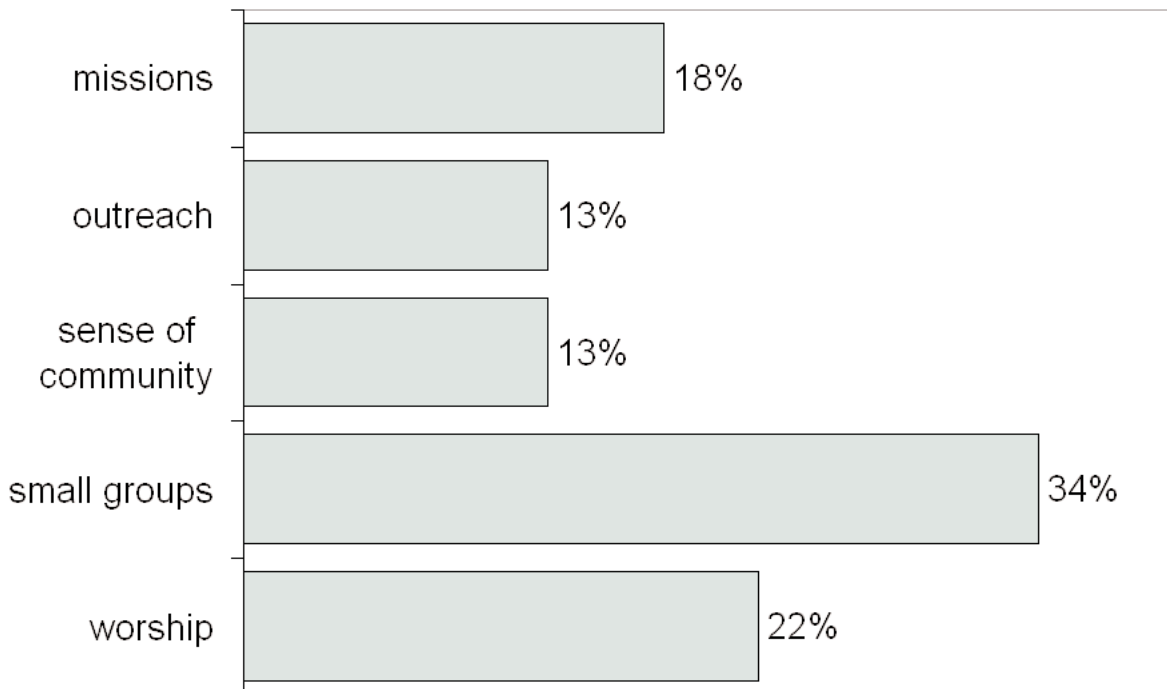
WHAT'S GOING WELL

The following charts show what is going well, as open-ended responses were categorized. Comparison charts provided based on size, generational and linguistic profiles. "First generation" churches are those with over 50% first generation Asian immigrants; "Second generation" are those with less than 50% first generation Asian immigrants.

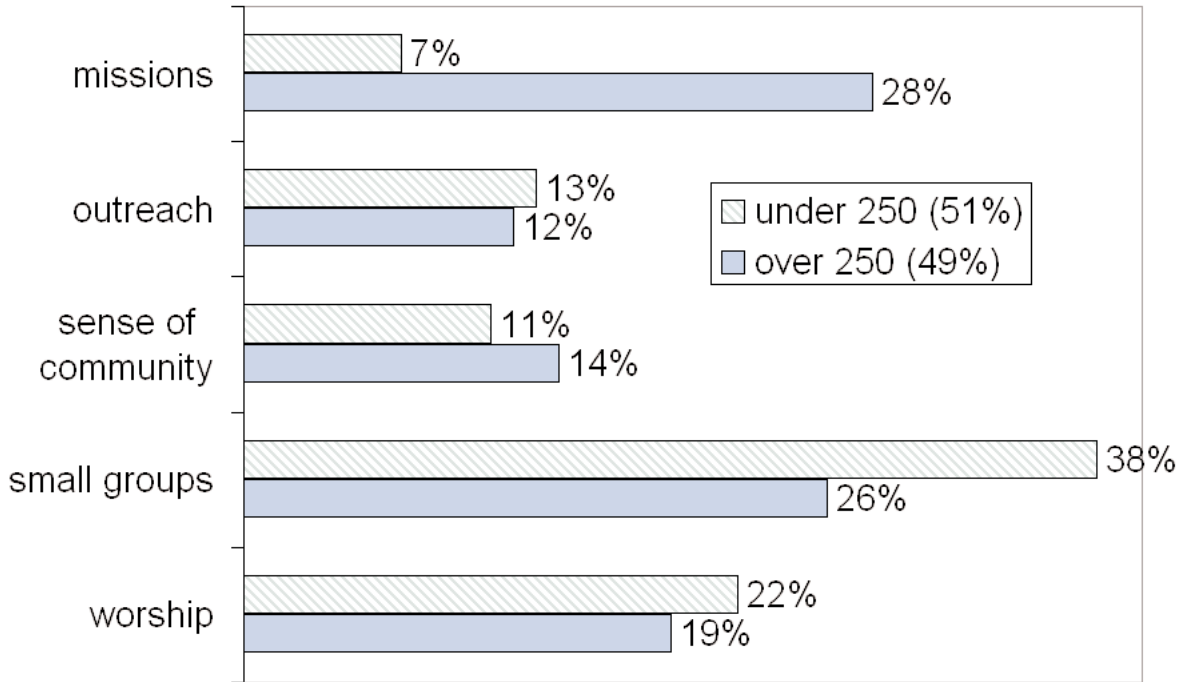
Of the surveyed churches, what is going well for Asian American churches of all kinds are small groups, worship and missions. Other observations:

- A sense of community and outreach are both important
- Stronger sense of community in second generation churches (16% vs. 6%) and English-only churches (11% vs. 2%).
- Missions are stronger in larger churches (28% vs. 7%) with over 250 in attendance.
- Small groups are stronger in smaller churches (38% vs. 26%) and second generation churches (38% vs. 21%).
- Youth ministries are stronger in first generation (12% vs. 5%) and multi-lingual churches (7% vs. 1%).

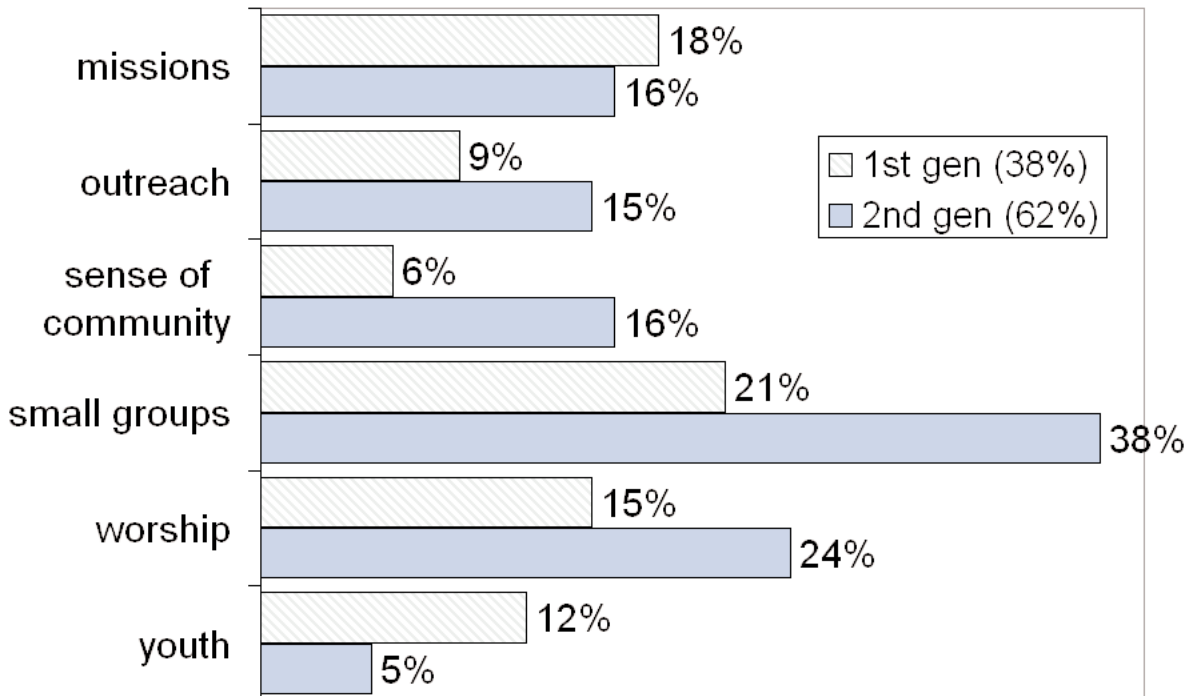
What's Going Well (Composite)



What's Going Well (by size)



What's Going Well (by generation)



What's Going Well (by language)

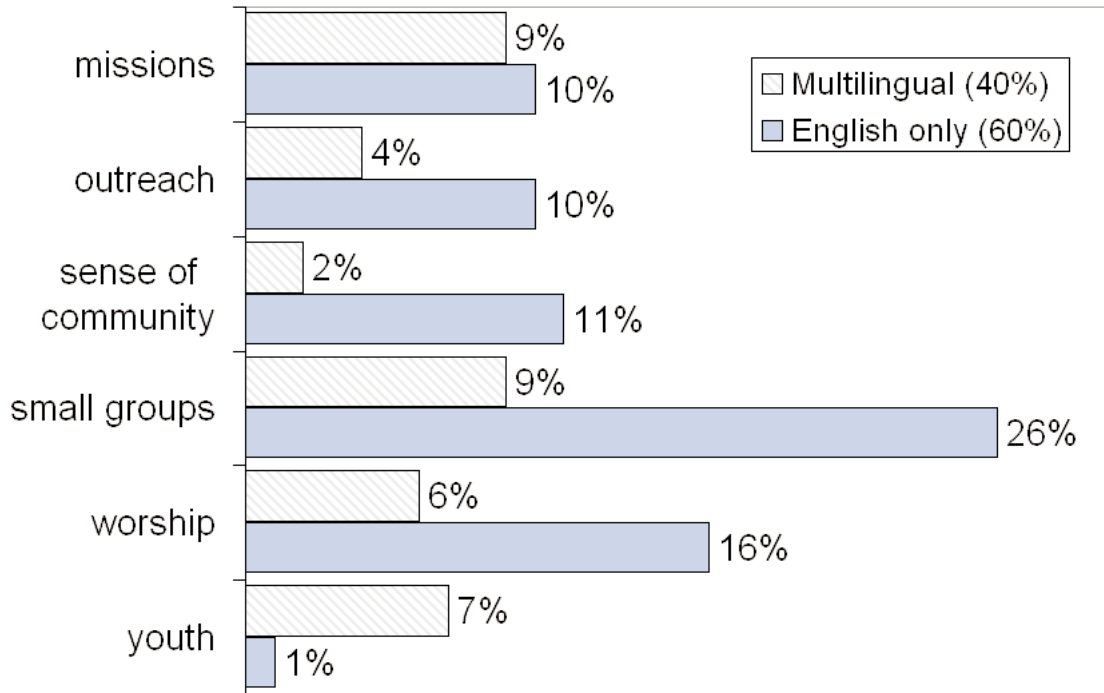


photo credit: www.flickr.com/photos/gabu-chan/31124862/

An estimated 4,000 Korean American churches exist in the United States, like this one in Los Angeles.

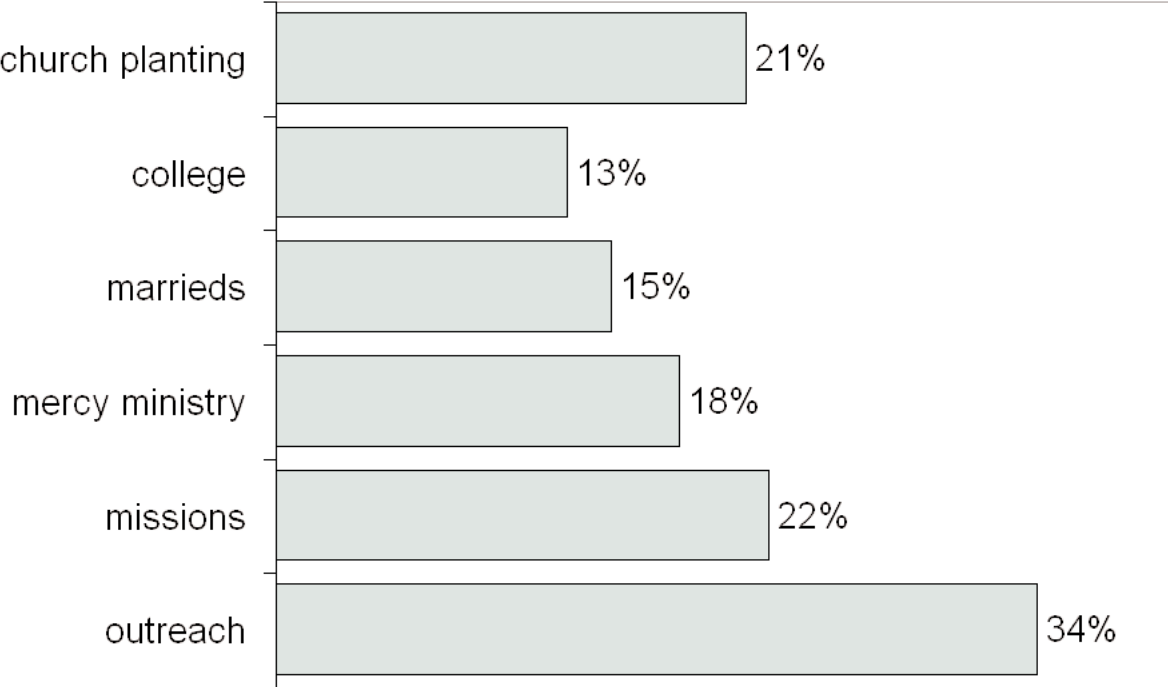
NEW OPPORTUNITIES BEING PURSUED

The following charts show what new ministry opportunities are being pursued, as open-ended responses were categorized. Comparison charts provided based on size, generational and linguistic profiles.

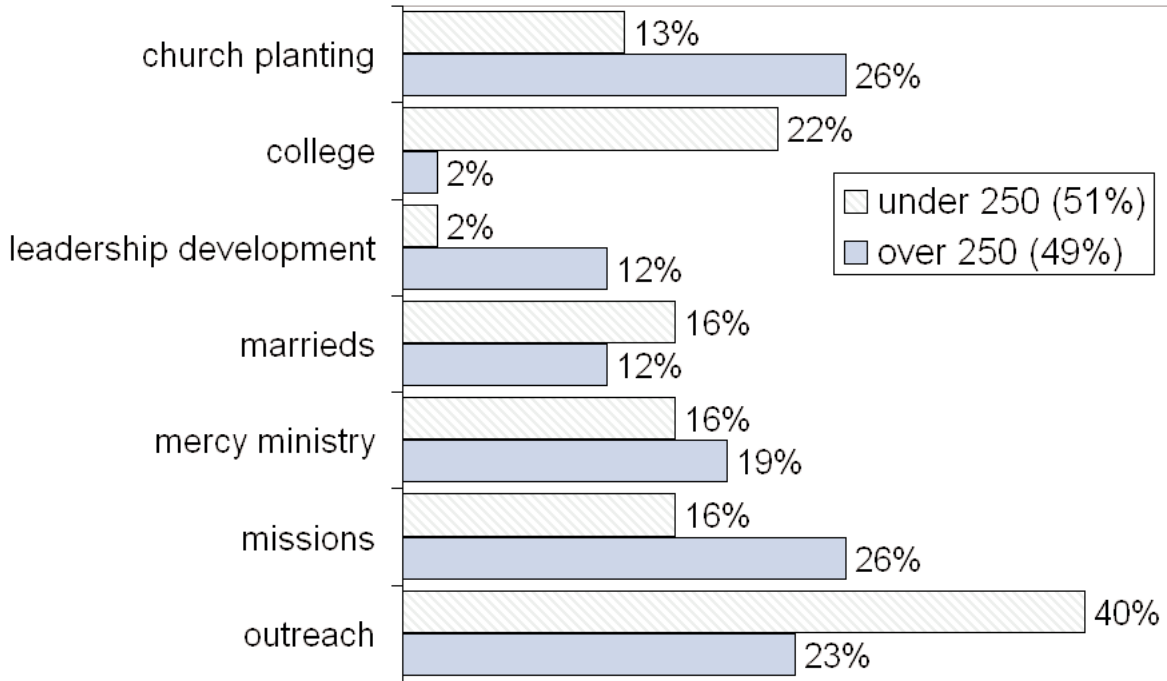
Of the surveyed Asian American churches, new ministry opportunities are being pursued in outreach, missions, and church planting. It's particularly encouraging to see mercy ministry being pursued (18%), perhaps to serve the immigrant population as well as the community surrounding a church's neighborhood. Other observations:

- Leadership development is a stronger opportunity in larger churches (12% vs. 2%) and multilingual churches (6% vs. 1%).
- Outreach is a stronger opportunity in smaller churches (40% vs. 23%) and English-only churches (22% vs. 12%).
- College is a stronger opportunity in smaller churches (22% vs 2%) and English-only churches (10% vs. 4%).
- Church planting is a stronger opportunity for larger churches (26% vs. 13%), second generation churches (25% vs. 9%), and English-only churches (17% vs. 4%).
- Missions is a bigger opportunity in larger churches (26% vs. 16%).

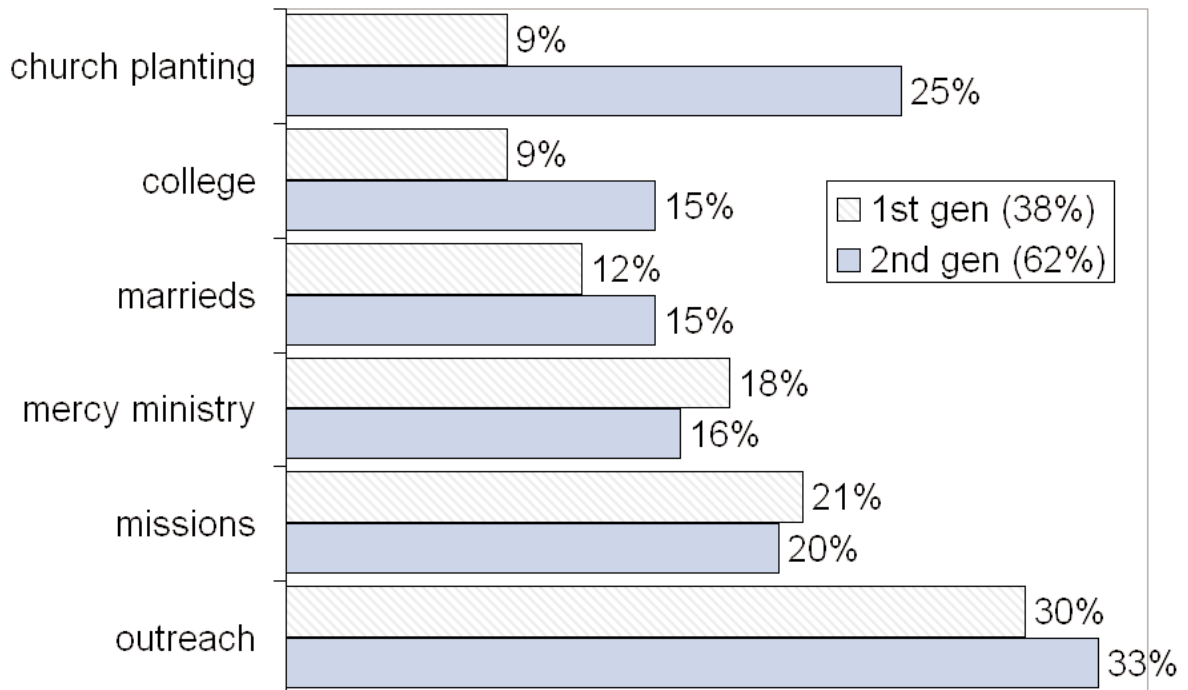
Opportunities (Composite)



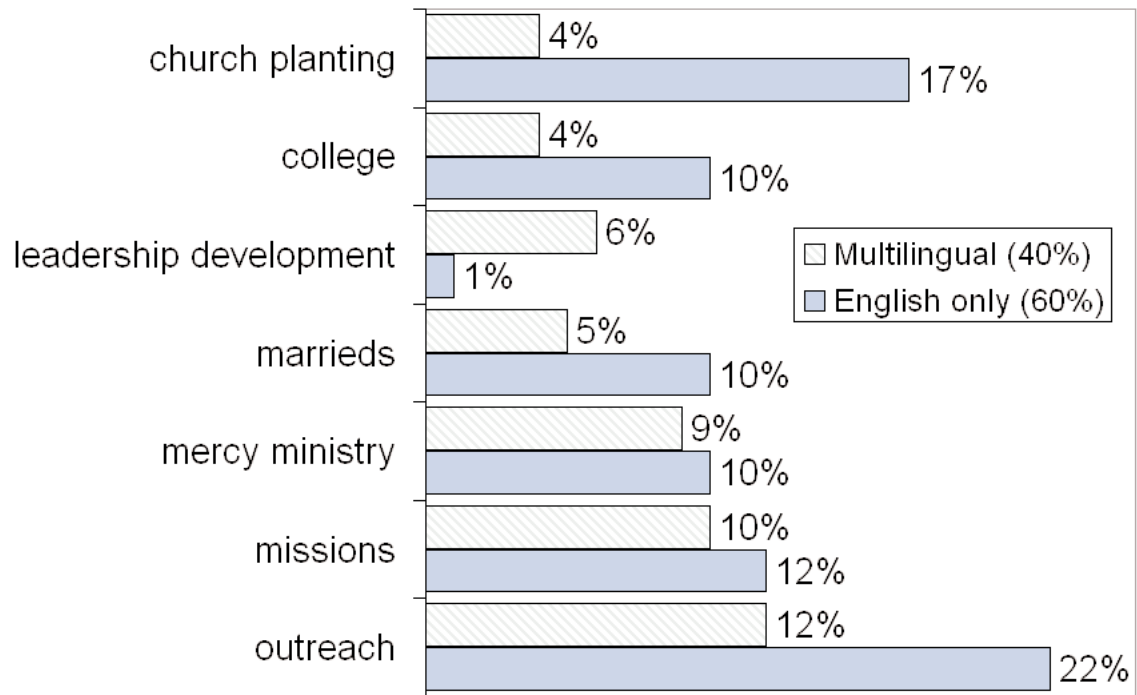
Opportunities (by size)



Opportunities (by generation)



Opportunities (by language)



L² Foundation launched in 2001 with a forum for pioneering Asian American church and parachurch leaders that affirmed their accomplishments in ministering to the next generation.

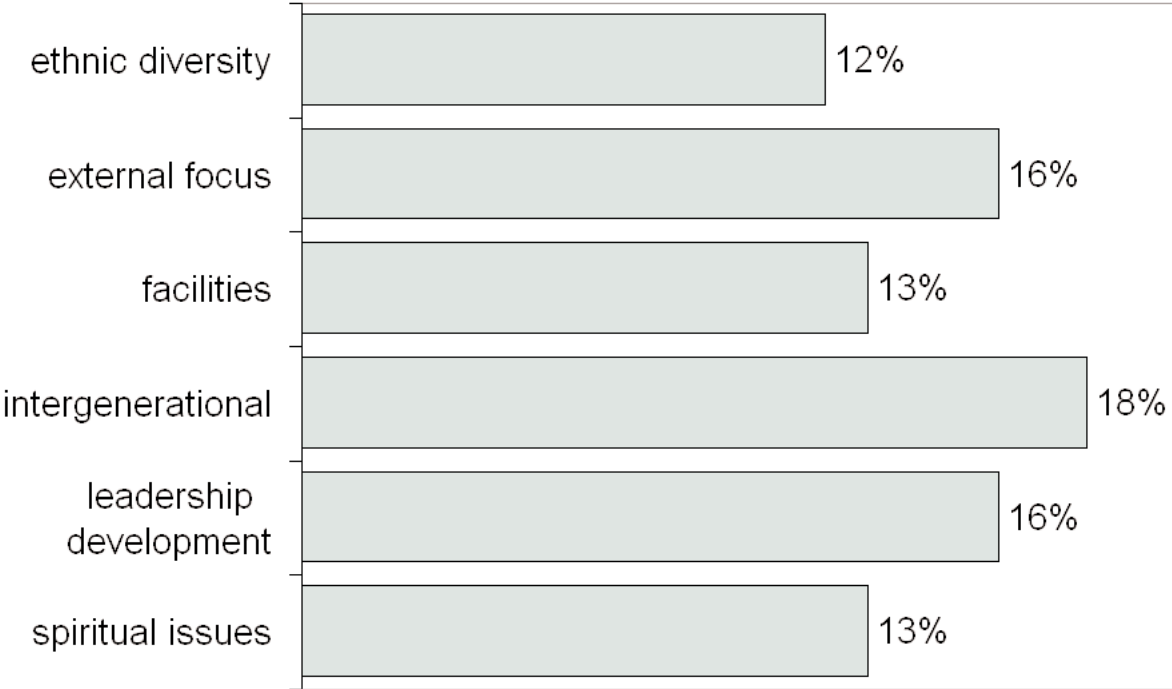
KEY CHALLENGES BEING FACED

The following charts show key challenges being faced, as open-ended responses were categorized. Comparison charts provided based on size, generational and linguistic profiles.

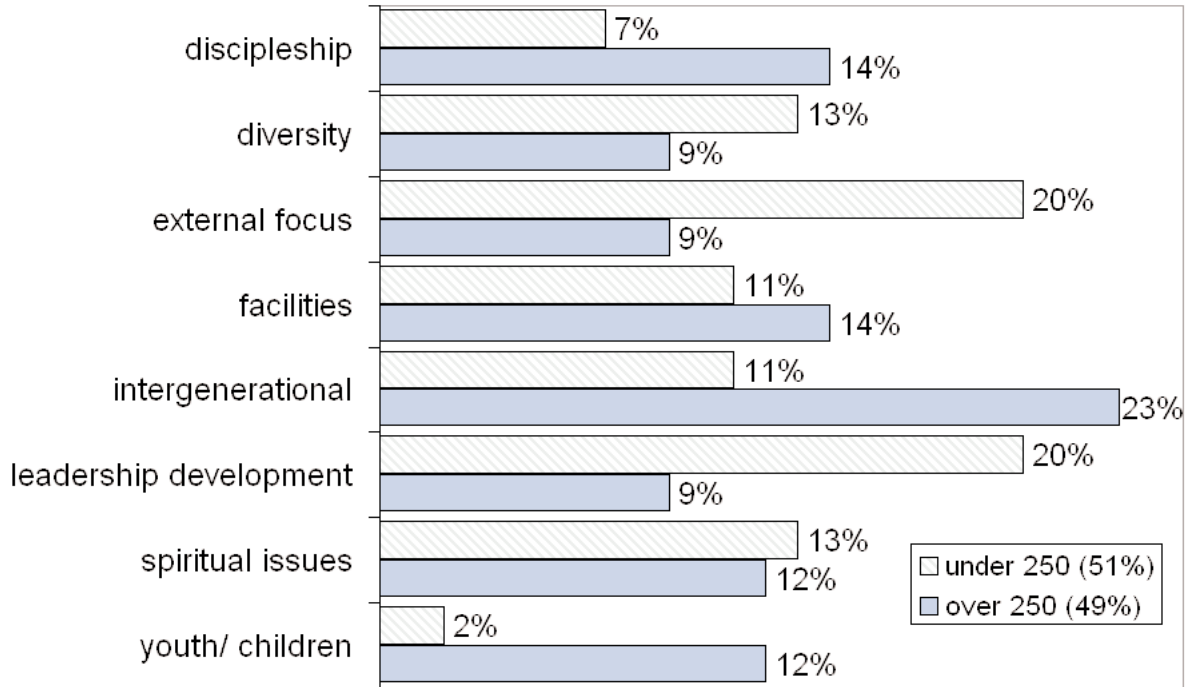
Of the surveyed Asian American churches, key challenges are ministering intergenerationally (18%), leadership development (16%), and increasing an external focus (16%). Worth noting is that 12% of surveyed churches identified ethnic diversity as a key challenge. Other observations:

- External focus is more challenging in smaller churches (20% vs. 9%) and English-only churches (11% vs. 5%).
- Discipleship is a key challenge in larger churches (14% vs. 7%).
- Ministry to youth and children is a main challenge in larger churches (12% vs. 2%) and in 1st-generation churches (12% vs. 4%).
- Leadership development is more challenging in second generation (18% vs. 9%) and English-only churches (12% vs. 4%).

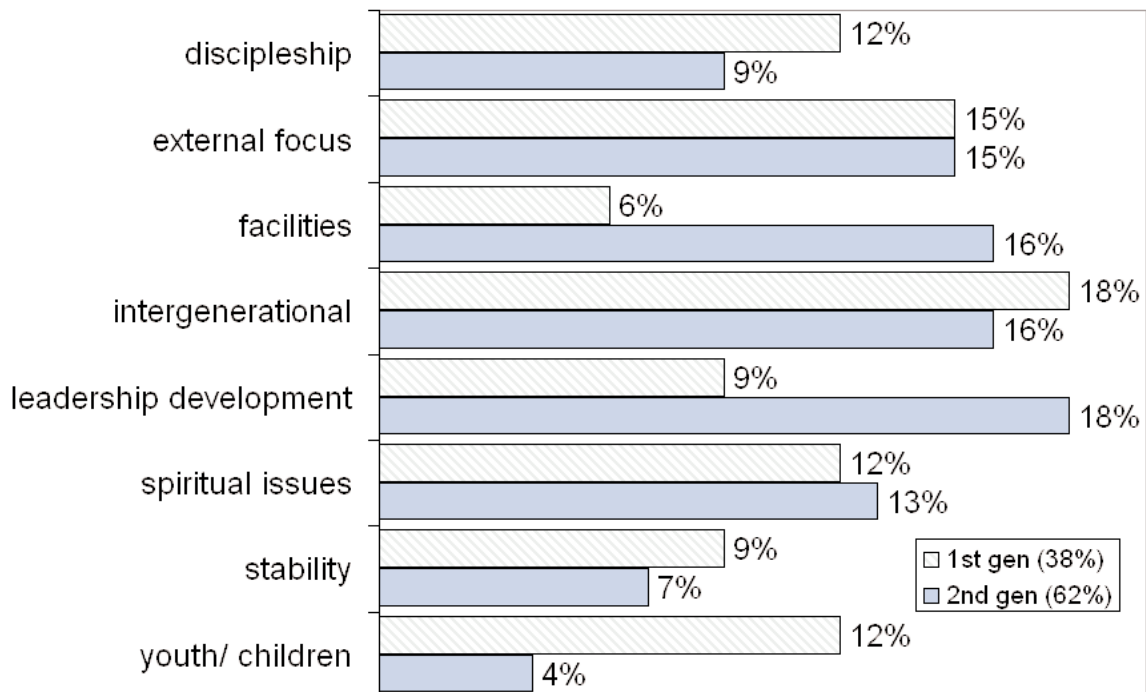
Challenges (Composite)



Challenges (by size)



Challenges (by generation)



Challenges (by language)

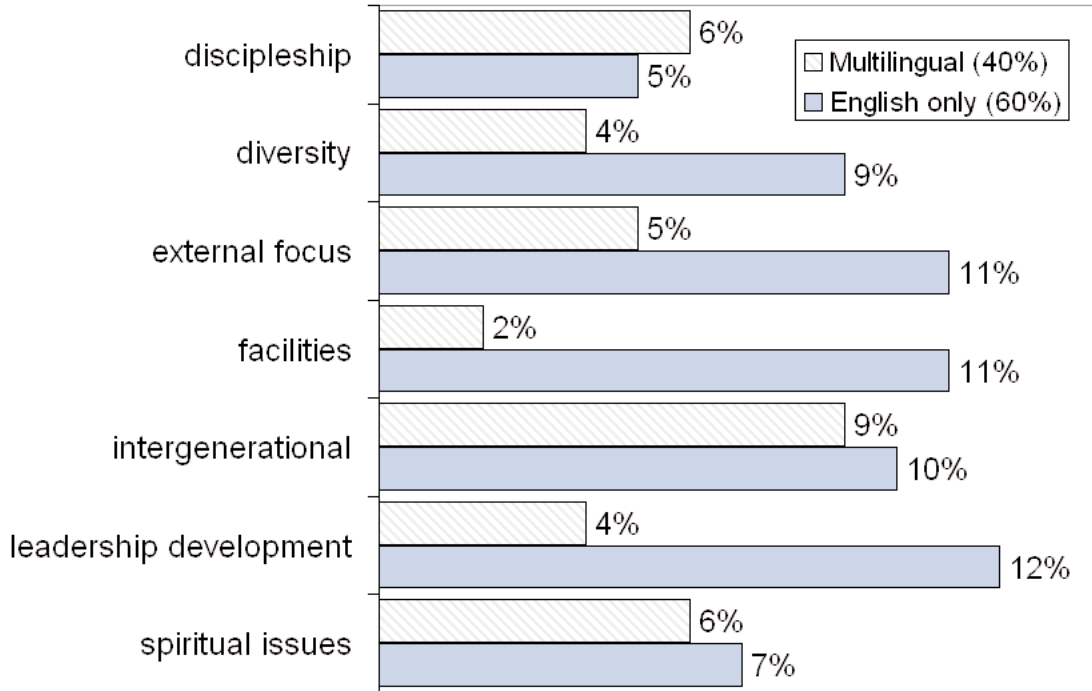













photo credit: www.flickr.com/photos/drdrewhonolulu/297941449/






The First Chinese Church of Honolulu illustrates how Asian culture influenced a building's architecture.

OVERALL PROFILE

The following charts show the overall profile of churches that responded to the survey.










1. How would you describe the makeup of your church?			
mostly Chinese		14	16%
mostly Korean		45	51%
multi-Asian		12	14%
multi-ethnic		12	14%
Other, please specify		5	6%
Total		88	100%

3. Which language worship services do you offer?			
Korean		23	26%
Mandarin Chinese		10	11%
Cantonese Chinese		8	9%
Japanese		0	0%
Vietnamese		0	0%
English Adult		84	95%
English Youth		40	45%
Other, please specify		7	8%

4. What is the Weekend Worship Attendance, including children? (not membership but total people present on a typical weekend)			
less than 100		20	23%
between 101 and 250		25	28%
between 251 and 500		23	26%
between 501 and 1,000		9	10%
more than 1,000		11	12%
Total		88	100%

5. Please estimate the generations represented by your total attendance (adults and children):									
Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	0%	10%	30%	50%	70%	90%	100%		
	First-generation Asian immigrants	21 27%	20 25%	5 6%	12 15%	19 24%	2 3%	0 0%	
	Children of first-generation immigrants	2 2%	7 8%	27 31%	11 13%	19 22%	19 22%	2 2%	
	non-Asians	17 21%	44 55%	12 15%	2 2%	3 4%	0 0%	2 2%	

6. Which of these describe your church's ministry developments anticipated in the near future (check all that apply)?

planning additional English worship services		17	19%
planning to launch new churches to reach other Asians		29	33%
planning to launch new churches to reach non-Asians		25	28%
already launched new churches to reach other Asians		21	24%
already launched new churches to reach non-Asians		6	7%
supporting missionaries financially and spiritually		65	74%
sending out short-term missions teams		74	84%
sending out career missionaries		54	61%
Other, please specify		14	16%

7. Please rate the effectiveness of your church in the following ministry areas:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	need improvement	acceptable	good	excellent	not applicable
Recovery Ministry	37 44%	18 21%	5 6%	1 1%	24 28%
Externally Focused Ministry	24 27%	30 34%	27 31%	6 7%	1 1%
Church Planting	23 26%	24 27%	16 18%	4 5%	21 24%
Global Outreach	18 20%	24 27%	33 38%	12 14%	1 1%
Senior Adults Ministry	24 27%	14 16%	15 17%	8 9%	27 31%
Stewardship	3 3%	29 33%	40 45%	16 18%	0 0%
Health Care	28 32%	19 22%	9 10%	1 1%	31 35%
Ministry to Marketplace Leaders	31 35%	27 31%	19 22%	3 3%	8 9%
University Ministry	28 32%	24 27%	23 26%	7 8%	6 7%

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The survey presents an introductory look into trends among Asian American churches. These results show wide-ranging approaches to serve the diverse ethnicities, generations and languages within the Asian American community and how churches are beginning to serve non-Asians as well. We hope this survey will encourage Asian American churches by showing how churches just like them are facing many similar opportunities and challenges in our effort to heed the call of the Gospel of Christ to make disciples of all nationalities.



Some churches, such as New Song Community Church, Irvine, CA, draw many races to their congregation, with Asians representing the largest block.



DJ CHUANG

DJ Chuang joined the Leadership Network team in November 2006 through our partnership with L² Foundation where he serves as Executive Director. DJ has a diverse background in technology and theology, having worked as a software engineer, in pastoral ministry and various roles in non-profit organizations. He is a graduate of Virginia Tech and Dallas Theological Seminary, and lives in the metro Washington DC area with his wife Rachelle and son Jeremiah.

Leadership Network welcomes your response. Contact DJ Chuang via email at dj.chuang@leadnet.org

About L² Foundation

L² Foundation (“L-Squared”) is a private foundation that seeks to develop the leadership and legacy of Asian Americans by providing support and resources. L² serves ministry and professional leaders, empowering them to fulfill God’s calling. Website: <http://www.L2Foundation.org>

About Leadership Network

Leadership Network fosters church innovation and growth through strategies, programs, tools and resources consistent with our far-reaching mission: to identify, connect and help high-capacity Christian leaders multiply their impact. Website: <http://www.leadnet.org>