The late Pope John Paul II once delivered a speech at a famous secular university in which he expounded on the Roman Catholic faith and values and their meaning and relevance for the 21st century. One of my university colleagues, upon reading this news, expressed his dismay. He said that the Pope should not have proclaimed Roman Catholicism at a secular university since most of the audience was not Roman Catholics, and many were atheists. He said discussing personal religious values in the public space would only turn a public forum into a religious gathering, imposing religious rules on social morals.

This kind of dichotomy between private and public space, and also between faith and secular, has been ingrained into the minds of many, including Christians. According to this thinking, faith belongs to the private arena and should not intrude into the public space, and so, religious voices should be absent from discussions in the public space. In theory, a pluralistic society implies that any persons of any worldview are allowed to participate in the process of constructing public policies and values. Yet voices of religion are prohibited and if heard, merely to concur with the secular mainstream.

However, is it truly possible to draw a clear line between public and private? More importantly, is this line ultimately drawn between secular and religion? In reality, someone has quietly put an equal sign between secular and public, and at the same time bundled religion and private tightly together. Is secular really synonymous to public? And is religion merely private, to be marginalized in public life? Shouldn’t a public forum advocating tolerance and pluralism accept religious voices? Is it true that a pluralistic society can only maintain harmony by confining religion in the private arena?

If it is not inappropriate in the public space for Lee Kuan Yew to speak about politics, Joseph Yam to speak about economics and Christine Loh to speak about environmental protection, why should the Pope not speak about religion in the same space? If scientists, politicians, economists, sociologists, social activists and professionals can each speak freely on issues of their concerns in the public space of a pluralistic society, why should religion be the exception, and only religion silenced?

What kind of faith is a voiceless religion? It would become something “seen and not heard”. It would then only become a form of art, merely for appreciation and idolization! In an age that is annoyed at the Holy Word and rejects prophets, religion often becomes a tool for personal spiritual enhancement. It becomes a commodity to tailor to individual spiritual needs, up for evaluation and selection in the spiritual market. But the Scripture emphasizes on “listening”, just as the disciples were told in the transfiguration to “listen to Him!”. Why should Christian voices be heard in the public space? There are at least the following reasons:

1. The God we believe in is the Lord of the public space. Given the one God is both “the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.” (Nicene Creed), He is naturally the Lord of all spaces and all values. Christian faith speaking in the public space is a proclamation that God is the immortal and sovereign One with power over all history, and scrutinizes all lives.

2. The Jesus whom we believe in is the Word who became flesh, and who “made His dwelling among us... full of grace and truth.” As such, we have no other choice but to display the Word which we believe in all facets of human lives, including public lives, speeches and actions.

3. The core of the Gospel not only requires us to love God, but also to love others. This translates into caring for neighbours and people who are around us in the public arena.

4. Every dimension and level in our modern lives, including cultural standards and societal ethical values, is heavily influenced by public discourse and public values. If the Christian faith does not penetrate into the public space, or if it does not plant itself into public values, it would become disconnected from modern life, and humanity would continue to be twisted by certain obscure values.

5. In a free and democratic society, it is every citizen’s right to speak in the public space. Every citizen has political rights in a democratic society. Through “one man, one vote”, every citizen in a democratic society has a voice which should receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law.

To be continued on next page...
6. The Christian faith can enhance the quality of public forums and public discourse. Nicholas Wolterstorff, a theologian from Yale University, points out that when faith is absent from public discourses and public discourse is completely secularized, the public space will naturally be populated with voices and values of ME-ism and WE-ism, driven by individualism, individual economic benefits and the market, in addition to the narrow-minded and exclusive "ethnic-group-ism" and nationalism etc.

“When the Light Beyond is dimmed, the darkness here would be hailed as ultimate brightness.” This epigram is as true as it can be. It is indeed worrying to see all the various types of chaotic and perplexing behaviours that have emerged in Hong Kong in recent years, e.g. the credibility crisis of political leaders, conflicts between people living in Hong Kong and Mainland China, polarization of wealth in society, commoditization of education, obsequious flattery towards the rich and powerful by universities, extreme dissatisfaction and distrust expressed by our youngsters towards systems, organisations and traditions etc. The simple catchphrase from a TV program, “This city is dying, you know?” has generated innumerable concurrences amongst citizens.

The Church has a part in the rise and fall of a city. Christians have responsibility towards the formulation of public policies and the construction of public values. Surely it is the responsibility of every believer and every church to actively engage the Christian faith in the society of Hong Kong.

The participation of Christian faith in the construction of public values is not through the establishment of the ilk of Medieval Christendom, but through the belief that the light of the Gospel should shine on men, and that the light of the Gospel should be put on the stand.

Evangelical churches are used to seeing missions as their commission and responsibility, believing that God commands us to co-work with Him to preach the gospel to all peoples. Therefore we go on mission for God and represent Him in His works. We also go on mission for those who have not heard the gospel, so that they may repent, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be able to enter the kingdom of God. Such beliefs are all correct, but they may represent only one side of the truth. Let us see if there would be other reasons for missions from the story of Jonah.

The Book of Jonah is strongly satirical. God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh situated in the northeast, instead he ran to Tarshish in the west. When the gentle mariners cried out to their gods to save them, Jonah avoided his and was fast asleep in the lowest parts of the ship. The former knew nothing about the true God, but they safeguarded themselves as well as others, and were reluctant to throw a stranger into the sea. Jonah surely had orthodox faith and a clear understanding of God, but he also had a self-destructive tendency and disregarded the lives of the Ninevites.

Chapter two of the Book contains Jonah’s prayer of repentance. In the belly of the fish Jonah knew that he was cast out by God and he asked for His mercy. However, Jonah did not say a word about God sending him to Nineveh, nor did he care that the Ninevites were soon to be destroyed. Jonah did not see himself as anything like “those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy”. He thought of himself superior to the gentiles with respect to God’s plan of salvation. If we so understand this psalm, we can see even more deeply the patience, mercy and grace of God.

The second half of the story is also very ironic. It only took Jonah one day to travel to Nineveh, which normally would require three days. We know that the Ninevites were long at feuds with the Israelites. The army of Nineveh was a group of terrifying and unscrupulous brutes that killed innocent people. Jonah had no intention of warning the Ninevites thereby prolonging the Israelites’ nightmare. Surprisingly, however, the whole city repented – from the honored to the insignificant, old to young, man to beast. Yet this humble and simple repentant heart infuriated the arrogant prophet, so that God had to teach him about the value of life with a short-lived tree.

The paradox of this story lies in the facts that the gentle mariners came to revere God through the testimony of a disobedient prophet, hence offered a sacrifice to Him; the evil Nineveh was spared because it repented after a few half-hearted proclamations; and most incredible of all was that though Jonah tried to defy God’s command and avoided Him, his three days and three nights in the fish’s belly was a type prefiguring Jesus’ resurrection, which was the largest and most significant miracle in Jesus’ time. It can be seen, therefore, that those whom God called may not necessarily be perfect heroes. God called Jonah to Nineveh, because He was gracious to its people and wanted to give them a chance. While Jonah fled from God, God used the opportunity to make Himself known to the mariners. At the same time, this calling let Jonah understand God’s heart, to see Israel’s enemy from His eyes and bring God’s salvation to those who persecuted His fellow countrymen. The mariners needed Jonah’s message whereas at the same time Jonah needed to see God’s mercy towards the Ninevites. Jonah obeyed God to become a missionary and was himself renewed from the experience. From the gentiles he learned how to revere God and respect other people’s lives, how to respond to his own issues and have a humble heart. It was by God’s grace from the start that Jonah completed his task, and there was nothing that the prophet could boast about.

Why is there the Book of Jonah in the Bible? It was very likely to be written for post-exile Jews, as its description of Nineveh suggests that its readers might not be familiar with the ancient city, and it is likely that it had already been destroyed for some time. Further, the Scripture calls the king of Assyria ‘the king of Nineveh’ which does not seem to be a pre-exile term. Jerusalem was destroyed, and God’s judgment purified and refined the Jews, making them cherish anew their identity as the chosen people of God. Judahim arose and urged people to return to the Law and value worship and holy living, but at the same time it emphasized exclusion and even enmity towards outsiders. Regardless of when the Book of Jonah was written, it would not diminish the importance of its core message: those having a pure faith and living a pious life cannot rely solely on orthodoxy while neglecting orthopraxis, and need to put aside the arrogance of nationalism, to embrace all peoples whom God loves, as well as learning from the gentiles their veneration for God, sympathy for the world, heeding warnings and forsaking evil deeds. Jonah symbolized the contemporary people of Israel as well as those who have been Christians for many years: those who are self-pitying, self-righteous, self-centered and proud, and exclude outsiders, bear grudges and ignore other people’s needs. Ultimately, Jonah needed to go on a mission because the Jews needed to carry out the commission to further understand God’s will.

God sent Jonah to get the Ninevites to repent, but at the same time God would like Jonah to repent. The Holy Spirit moved the author to write the Book of Jonah so that God’s chosen people might repent. Today, every time that a missionary reaches out to non-believers is an occasion to challenge his faith and behavior. Every encounter is an opportunity to learn and grow. Whenever a missionary gains a new spiritual insight, it in turn helps the supporting church further understand the Truth. No doubt the unbelieving world needs missionaries; the church also needs missionaries to bring renewal to the believing community.
Struggles of Small and Medium Congregations (1)

Our alumnus Rev. Paul Ma’s book The Church is a Limited Company most poignantly points to a fact that many of us would prefer to ignore. The fact is, many of our small-medium size churches exist in the mode of small-medium enterprises (SMEs). In order to survive, SMEs need to maintain the momentum of growth. Growth thus means almost everything. For many small-medium congregations the pressure for growth is just paramount. Imperceptibly, “growth” has become the decisive “benchmark” for the health of the church. This can have tremendous impact on how the church perceives her nature and mission. As Rev. Ma points out, “With the focus on growth and business development...with such SME mentality...what we are most concerned with our congregation is whether there is growth and what is the performance—that means the number of members, the amount of offerings, the size of the church auditorium, the number of ministries...all these have become business targets of ministers, deacons and elders...when they see the continual expansion of their congregations, with growing number in church attendance, with more and more offerings, with increasing ministerial activities...they would feel encouraged. On the contrary...they would feel frustrated. Without knowing it, all these have become their emotional indicators or pressure gauge.”

But what’s wrong with that? What is wrong with the drive for growth, even if it carries with it the SME ethos? What is wrong with this SME ethos? Well, a congregation is qualitatively different from a SME. If it is being run like a SME, there is bound to be identity crisis if the church still has a sense of her true identity as a church, her mission and her calling. To operate with growth and survival as the measure of all things would seriously distort her nature and mission. A church in the mode of a SME would marginalize what should be the core business and core value of a church. It would render what her real struggles in the world should be totally irrelevant. Let me expound with an observation on the development of church in Hong Kong for the last twenty years. In twenty years, the number of congregations has grown from 800 to 1350, a growth of 550 in twenty years. Yet with such a phenomenal growth in number, together with the emergence of a number of mega churches, the church in Hong Kong has also become voiceless in society, her relevance to the rapid socio-cultural change has become negligible. From mid-Seventies to mid-Nineties, the church in Hong Kong had been a significant shaping force in society. Now she has become marginalized. We cannot but ask, why with the increasing number of churches and Christians, our impact to society has drastically declined? The answer is quite obvious. When the church cares her own expansion and maintenance, when increase in number occupies her full attention, she cannot avoid being inward looking. With such inward looking orientation, no matter how many “out-reach” activities she has generated, they always refer back to the well-being of the church herself.

What should be the real struggle of the small-medium congregations? Is it the technique of growth? Or how can we be faithful to the mission of the Kingdom of God in this market-driven trend? Are we making real impact on people’s life? Are we making true disciples for Christ? Are we transforming values in our society that may be distorting people’s life?

If we are not careful, a growth-strategy can put certain people group on the margin of the church. In the third year of our new congregation in Tin Shui Wai, a pastor of another denomination, while appreciating our emphasis on serving the so-called “New Immigrant from China”, remarked with good intention, “New Immigrant? Well, that is mighty difficult. If we put too much resource on them, the church cannot have much development.” That is quite true. To serve this particular group of people, we really need to invest a lot of energy and material resources, and the return is slow and uncertain. But then can we ignore this group of people for the sake of our quest for growth? If the church is a business like that of an SME, such calculation and strategic estimation is more than reasonable. But is the church an SME? Can she make strategies like an SME? Are such strategies in line with the nature and mission of the church?

To seek growth is not a problem. Using strategy for growth is not a problem either. The problem is: have we allowed the church’s real mission to be hijacked by the obsession with growth? We must ask ourselves constantly, have we allowed our strategies obstruct God’s action? Have we left space for Him to work?
Thanksgiving ~ Living in Africa

Antonia Poon
MCS 2010, Dec/CS 2008

If you have only one liter of water each day, how will you use it?

Water can be found in African villages or the hillside, but the source could be very far from home. If you needed to walk 2 km of uneven terrain while carrying 20 liters of water you would cherish every drop of water you get. I had used one liter of water all for cleaning up myself, washing my face, hair and small items of clothing. Was that my limit? I don’t know and maybe when things get worse one day I will need to learn to use that one liter even more wisely to do more important things.

I have spent my one year of short-term mission in Uganda. I do not have impressive figure of saved souls or a list of “accomplishments” to prove the worthiness of my presence, nor have I exciting stories to capture readers’ attention. Even so, little by little God has led me to see another side of the world, and helps me to redefine my understanding of life and living.

I am living well in Uganda, and using one liter of water a day is only an occasional small challenge. Comparing with families in Hong Kong, I am practically living in a mansion, with my bedroom far bigger than most living rooms in Hong Kong. Therefore I often tell myself that I am indeed very blessed compared with missionaries who serve in remote mountain areas.

My goal for this year in Uganda is to train the locals from a seminary’s childhood education department to be kindergarten teachers. Seven students needed to enroll before I could start a class. At first we thought we did not have enough applicants, so I asked God, “What can I do for the whole year here?” In the end we had nine students – I was overjoyed and did not care that I ‘only’ had nine.

One day, the principal told us that if such low attendance continued, our department might have to be closed because the school could not afford to pay the teachers’ salary. Later I found out that my value in serving the school lied not in my passion or talent, but in the fact that I was a volunteer missionary. I was devastated, but the Lord’s word comforted and reminded me that my value was not determined by man, for I came because He chose me to fulfill His will. This reassurance helped me pick myself up and continue my work.

My most memorable moment so far was the British Royal Wedding, and it was quite different watching it in Africa. On that same day Uganda had one of the most serious riots since the election, and bullets were flying everywhere in the district where I live and work, killing innocent women and children, and taxis passengers were used as “human roadblocks” to stop rioters breaking through the police line. Local events stopped me from calmly watching the wedding of the century. I asked God how there could be such huge disparities in the world that He created? I understand that resources can never be distributed completely equally, but perhaps the difference could be reduced? Human value can be so different among nations. I am thankful that I grew up in an environment of plenty but this is not guaranteed. However, we need not be sad for the people here. Even if they live in a tumultuous land, they are mostly simple, easily contented and happy. Suddenly, for one moment I did not know how I should be, how I should view this imbalanced world, and how I should continue to live? What is the meaning of “living”? We may give an ideal answer from the theological viewpoint, but personal experience says otherwise.

The culture, communication style and moral values here have brought on many challenges for me. I still spend much effort on balancing and adjusting to life here. On the other hand, although I still enjoy the benefits and convenience brought about by the material things and advanced technology, I now hold quite a different view on life. While I give thanks for the privilege of having a hot shower I need to remember that some regions run short of drinking water. While Hong Kong people are demanding or debating over certain matters I give thanks from my heart that the majority of them are using civilized means, but I also need to remember that many countries are adopting high-handed policy against their own people. While I struggle in the morning to get up for church, I give thanks for this freedom to worship, but I also remember brothers and sisters who for religious or political reasons cannot worship openly.

Seeing another side of the world made me realize that simple things in life, such as a sip of water, a good sleep, having a job, a meal or the ability to serve, are all by grace. To be ‘alive’ is not a certainty. We must enjoy each day that God has given us.

Would you like to try bathing tonight with only one liter of water?
Life in Nepal

Po-kau Tang
MCS 1989

"I knew that God is love, even after I believed in Jesus that had been head knowledge only. It was when we washed each other's feet today that I truly felt Jesus' love..."

"When I realized that it was Jesus who washed my feet, I felt so unclean and unworthy, and yet Jesus accepted me wholly as I am..."

These are some thoughts after the exercise of feet-washing in a Bible study group for sisters. I was deeply touched when they shed tears as they washed feet - their lives were connected with Jesus, which is much more fruitful than being knowledgeable. * * *

There was once a period of fasting and prayer, the evil spirit manifested with one member screaming loudly. Everyone prayed together and drove out the evil spirit.

Another time a missionary visited me and we shared our experiences on spiritual warfare. I told her that sometimes the evil spirit would harass me in the middle of the night that a dark shadow would overpower me so that I could not move. I would confess my sins and declare that I belong to Jesus, and commanded it to leave in the name of Jesus. In response, the missionary said, "I had a similar experience! While I was serving at the training centre in the west, I once saw a shadow sitting around. My husband and I would immediately pray and sing hymns. The shadow would then cover its ears and shout to us to stop, eventually it was forced to leave."

Recently I was leading a fellowship in a prison and a Nepalese coworker asked if I seemed not feeling well. I told her, "Every time I smell something unique I would feel a very strong and oppressive power around me, and my chest feels tight. "I felt the same, too. I felt so sick earlier that I just wanted to leave!" Different images of Hindu deities and gods were all over the prison. I had to declare God's name unceasingly and cleanse the place with prayer throughout the fellowship.

The Lord holds my hand - I search the mind of the Lord -
Reflections on works in Cambodia

Debbie Choy
MCS 1987

Eleven years on, God's grace led me to revisit the mission field in Cambodia. Last time I had a few fellow missionaries serving together and the leadership of a field director, now I am the only overseas worker. Indeed God's grace is made perfect in human weakness. On March 8, 2010, I arrived in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. Its heavy traffic, dusty and crowded streets was a big contrast to my hometown of Silicon Valley, California. I reminded myself not to make comparison. I ought to leave those behind and gracefully accept and appreciate the beauty here. It was always easier said than done. I thought I was a flexible person, and it was God who called me to serve here. Nevertheless I need to learn many things anew and make adjustments, including letting go of value judgments which I thought were matter-of-course, such as crossing the road only when the green light is on, being on work at time, or respecting one's own personality. Obviously it does not mean that I will give up some of these core values, but I need to know which ones I would hold on to, and which ones I would let go and commit to God.

As the person in charge of the organization, I have many reflections from serving there for almost a year and a half. One of my works is to liaise with and share information or experience with other organizations serving the girls with similar backgrounds. Most of their co-workers are westerners and in one meeting I was the only dark-haired person. I realized that I need to get used to not only to the Cambodian but also other cultures. Sometimes I would need to speak English, simple Cambodian, Putongua and my mother-tongue in one day, constantly switching languages and adjusting. I felt like Paul in the old days. At first I felt frustrated and confused, but the Lord Jesus is the source of my strength. Just being myself and having the Holy Spirit and His peace I now feel much more at ease.

Challenging tasks have emerged in Phnom Penh, right from the start when I looked for a temporary office, had our first staff, and applied for the status of a local non-profit-making organization, to now having an office of eight...
Board Meeting

- The 2012 AGM is to be held in the morning of June 30 to adopt the auditor report, appoint new auditor and elect Board members. Before and after the AGM there will be meetings of the current and new Board respectively.

Development Trips

- March 9 – 19: Mr. Kwok-kuen Leung, Director of Word of Life Ministry, led meetings and promoted the ‘Word of Life’ Bible study ministry in Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra.
- May 28 – June 3: President Yu will take part in the Lausanne Consultation on Global Theological Education, after that he will visit Tokyo to lead The "CGST Night."

The Institute for Excellence

- April 17 – 19: The Institute for Excellence on ‘Financial Sustainability and Institutional Changes’ sponsored by Overseas Council International was held at CGST. 41 presidents and representatives from 15 seminars in Asia attended the conference.

Graduation Exercises and Dinner

- The Thirty-fifth Graduation Exercises is scheduled to be held at the Wing Kwong Pentecostal Holiness Church at 3pm on June 30, Saturday. Rev. Dr. Chan Fong, Associate Professor of Singapore Bible College is guest speaker. Graduation Dinner will be held at Yau Yet Chuen Garden City Club that evening.

Financial Report

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<th>Feb, 2012 General Fund</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuition &amp; other income</td>
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Outstanding mortgage loan as at February, 2012: US$ 3,280,641

Prayer Requests

1. Pray for students who are graduating in June, that God will grant those who are serving full-time a humble heart to serve in faithfulness wherever God places them. Pray also for those who have completed the diploma program. May God use them to witness Christ in their professions.

2. Pray for the applicants who are being considered for the new academic year. May God direct the selection process and give wisdom to the Admissions Committee members.

3. Pray for the preparation of our Revival Meeting in June. May God use the Meeting to bless and edify brothers and sisters.

Response

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☐ Please send me the CGST Quarterly English Bulletin
☐ I would like to donate to CGST $ __________ (specify currency)

Please use it for:
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☐ Graduate Programs
☐ Campus Redevelopment Fund
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☐ Faculty Support
☐ Research & Publication
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* Note: 1. Tax-deductible receipts issued to Hong Kong and Canada credit card donations.
   2. For US credit card donations and requests issued by US, please go to https://www.cgsusa.org/donation.php

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