

the bcec

**english
cantonese
mandarin**

i know lots of you don't realise it, but this is a tri cultural church, that revolves around one primary ethnicity. What I mean by that is that each congregation has a different cultural background, and yet they might be ethnically chinese.

It's this diversity that makes our church more complex than other churches. Because we desire to hold these complexities as opportunities for us to love one another and make sacrifices for the good of the others.



And so in 2009, when I started developing the future of the BCEC, and I thought about what's our Core Value. What is it that should define us as a congregation. And it was clear, that the Shema, should be at the heart of that.

the bcec

LOVE GOD
&
LOVE YOUR
NEIGHBOUR

And so for the past 7 years, the church has been clear that this is who we are. It's great, because with a multi-cultural church, Love, is what binds us together, and lets us share and serve one another, even indirectly.

But over the past year, and as we've searched for a property, and a pastor for the Cantonese congregation, another question has begun to arise.



vision.

But this is one of our most challenging questions.

Vision. What's our church's vision.

**Vision is asking:
God, is there a specific
purpose that You
have for our church?
Why are we here?**

What is vision?

Vision is asking: God is there a specific purpose that you have for our church. Why are we here? Answering that, helps us know where we should be moving, what we should be doing, and what's our direction for growth.

It helps us to see our mission clearer. It's a broader picture of how we are supposed to be applying God's love.

And so begins the journey.



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In fact, it was such an interesting property, because it had a decent sized hall, some interesting layout quirks, but it was at an intersection of cultures. And for the English congregation, that's us, it was a challenge for us to be part of a community. To be actively missional into a community.

And at first, i looked at it and thought, haha, the church will never go for a property like that. It is the opposite of what Chinese people want. There's a certain excitement about it — but to be honest, perhaps a more romantic notion of moving in a transforming an area. It's a common missions fallacy — the idea of the white saviour bringing salvation to the heathens. But being a missionary here in the first place, the reality of impacting a community means being willing to be PART of the community.

It would mean congregation members being willing to move into the area. To put our kids into schools there. To sacrifice our time, money, and energy into the different parts of the area. It also meant we'd have to learn very quickly how to pray for deliverance, provide counselling, and life skills. It's a slow, loving process.

It was exciting. Because God's been stirring a desire to reach other marginalise British Ethnic Minorities, and other immigrants. But just because I feel one way, doesn't mean it's a vision for the church.



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So I was asking God.

What are we doing here?

Where do we fit in?

Where does an English speaking congregation fit into all of this?

How do I balance the fact that there are three very different cultures, God do you want us to be separate. Is there something you're doing?



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And it comes back to Love God &
Love Your Neighbour



Meanwhile, we were coming to the final year of running i9:2. It was our 5th year. This was a 5 year project I started to understand the complexities of working with young adults. This was a group that most churches are missing — and so we started a conference to gather them, to share with them, to encourage, to connect, to support, to hear from them. And whilst we were running this conference, my phone was notifying me with emails about this property in lozells, people's opinions, fears, thoughts — the works. And in my mind, I was wrestling with, God, what is it that you want from us? What's our church's purpose.



And so when I came back, I spent a night in Cardiff, hearing from there church, finding out more about their situation. And putting off all those emails and texts about this building.

God, what is your plan?

So coming back to Birmingham, the first order of business was to figure out what in the world we're doing. So I arranged to meet up with Li Qiang, as up until then we'd just been praying separately.

Meanwhile, I'd gotten wind of the news that the Cantonese congregation were chattering away about this.

And then, yesterday morning, when I sat down with Li Qiang.

We talked about the building in Lozells. We talked about what was the faith, not being afraid, but at the same time knowing what we were doing was right.

And then it all clicked.

In all our previous conversations, Li Qiang and I have shared the same heart for our church. We want our congregation to be healthier, to rise, to get stronger. But why? Not just for the sake of Birmingham, although the need is great. But because we also saw the state of the churches around the UK. We wanted to be a part of what God was doing around the UK, and we knew that being in Birmingham, God wants us to be an active part of that too.

We're not the best church there is. There are a lot of things we still don't know how to do. We're not even the biggest church there is. But these are the things God's been preparing us for in the past few years.



We've become more gracious.
We've become more generous.
We're learning to become more
Kingdom centric



Li Qiang and I have both echoed our desires to see our church be used by smaller churches, as a support, as an encouragement, as a training ground. As a development point. Where we learn from each other. We don't want to be the biggest church, but we want to be a helpful church.

And for us, part of our neighbours are other churches in similar situations. The other Chinese churches who struggle with cantonese, english and mandarin balances.



share.

we're here to share everything we learn,
and whatever we learn along the way with
our brothers and sisters around us.

And because of our context, we're best
poised to share that with those who are
similar.

We hope that our church can be ground
for training, equipping, building, growing,
encouraging, development, and
fellowship. Not just within in Birmingham,
but around as well.

share Christ.

share love.

share what we've learnt.

share our resources.

share our experiences.

Our vision is to become a sharing church,
that's actively investing in the chinese
churches around, for God's glory and
worship across the UK.

Hebrews 13:16 Do not neglect to do good
and to share what you have, for such
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but...

what does this mean for the English congregation. If our church as a whole is focusing on becoming a sharing community for the wider network of Chinese churches.

The English congregation is committed to becoming multi-ethnic right?



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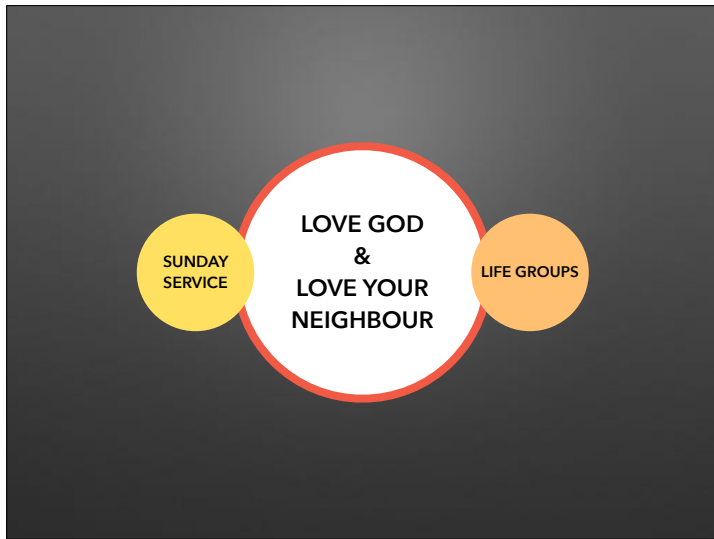
We wouldn't be ready to plant a church. So what steps would we need to get to to be ready for that. I believe that as we grow in our Kingdom understanding, develop in our sharing culture, we'll be better poised to join a community, and partner with existing churches when we do a church plant. Something we're still not ready to do yet.

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"You shall **love** the Lord
your **God** with **all your heart**
and with **all your soul** and
with **all your strength** and
with **all your mind**, and your
neighbour as yourself."

Luke 10:27

And so I want to talk a little bit about
the Road Ahead.



At the moment we've got a pretty good Sunday Service, and some pretty good LifeGroups. But at the same time, we struggle because we're developing helpers, but not necessarily leaders. And we don't have anything in place to help people actually move towards maturity. The LifeGroups are in a tricky place trying to balance community with deeper teaching. And in the same way we're trying to cram everything into the Sunday service as well.





Love God together.
In our brokenness, in our differences.
Love God in grace.



Love God, in accountability and transparency.



CULTIVATION

Where we strengthen our minds and faith in learning God's Word & Truth

Cultivation happens through classes offered throughout the year, to help us progress and grow towards maturity. These classes help strengthen our mind in the truth of God, preparing us for the experiences ahead.

Christianity Explored

New Believers

Baptism

Foundations

Studying the Bible

Church Membership

Discipleship

Spiritual Gifts

Leadership 101

Intercessory Prayer

Basic Theology

Love God with your mind.



CONSOLIDATION

Where we develop through our personal issues and struggles through coaching, mentoring, or counselling.

Spiritual Breakthrough
Counselling
Mentoring

Love God with heart, soul, mind.



COMMISSION

Where we challenge ourselves to step out of our comfort zones to keep our heart, mind and soul clear to God's mission and compassion.

What can we share with:
Churches
Immediate Communities
Surrounding Communities

Love God with your strength. Putting it all together.



So the youth group. Or the children. Or the adults. Or the couples.

An example:

Anthony loves worship, but generally lacks maturity. He has a love for God and a desire to serve, but really struggles with areas of sin, commitment, and lifeskills. He's been on and off to a LifeGroup now for a year, and really wants to serve, but it's difficult because of his lack of consistency. We suggest to pair him up with a mentor - a committed relationship towards growth. The mentor challenges him with lifeskills, and also recommend for him to go to a spiritual breakthrough session. He find that really helps with his spiritual life, and begin to attend the LifeGroups more regularly. As he grows in commitment, he begins to grow in love and humility, and finds opportunities to serve in church in different ways. A few years later he joins a short term missions trip to Europe.

Sarah has been coming to the BCEC for a few years now, and has been a Christian for many years before coming to BCEC. As she's transitioned jobs, she's settled into the church congregational life well. She's also joined a LifeGroup, and has gotten community support there. But she's been wondering whether there's more than just her working life, but she doesn't think she's called to go to Bible School. She's been yearning to go deeper so she signs up for a Basic Theology Class and absolutely loves it. She wants more, so she starts exploring things like Old Testament and New Testament. She discovers that not only does she love learning, she loves teaching too. So she signs up for the Leadership Training Class, and then starts offering to teach some of the cultivation classes, starting with a Foundations Class. Later on this passion becomes something she brings to help teach and equip other churches around the UK.

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let's become the first Chinese church
to plant a British church in the UK.