

William Leung is the General Secretary of Alliance Global Serve in Hong Kong.

William Leung

HONG KONG MISSION MOVEMENT

Hong Kong (HK) was once a crown colony of the United Kingdom between 1842 and 1997. It is now a largely self-governing territory, officially a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

Over the 155-years of British governance, Hong Kong developed from a lowly fishing port into a global metropolitan and

international financial centre. From a barren island, it became the Pearl of the Orient that blends the East and West.

It was during this period of colonial expansion that missionaries came from the West and began planting churches in HK from ground zero.

Five mission societies initiated church planting and pioneering work in the colony.¹ Jehu Lewis and Henrietta Hall Shuck (1814-1863, 1817-1844) laid significant ground work for the Hong Kong church (HKC). In July of 1842, their first church building project was completed and dedicated to God. Within the first two years, the Baptist team erected two churches and one Christian school to serve HK.² From this humble beginning, and by the grace of God, the number of churches has grown to a total of 1,181, representing 67 different denominations or affiliations—according to the City-



Hong Kong In the 1800s

Wide Church Census conducted by the “Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement Ltd in 2004”.³

The same census reported that the average weekly attendance in worship was 216,739. That means, on average, about 3% of the population (about 7 million people) attend church worship every week in HK.

In obedience to the Great Commission, Western missionaries, following the footsteps of their spiritual predecessors, came to HK. They endured the World Wars, the Japanese Occupation Era, squatter camps, the Shek Kip Mei Fire, China's Cultural Revolution, 1967 Riots, and they were deeply involved in building up a Christian presence and witness in HK.

The foundation and legacy that they had laid over the course of a century



Henrietta & Jehu Shuck

made it possible for “protestant organizations to operate three post-secondary institutions.... They run



144 secondary schools, 192 primary schools, 273 kindergartens and 116 nurseries....they operate 16 theological seminaries and Bible institutes, 16 Christian publishing houses and 57 Christian bookshops. They run seven hospitals with 3,749 beds, 18 clinics and 59 social service organizations that provide a wide range of social services, including 227 community and youth centers, 74 day care centers, 17 children's homes, 35 homes for the elderly, 106 elderly centers, two schools for the blind and deaf, 47 training centers for the mentally handicapped and 15 camp sites. Five international hotel-type guest houses are managed by the YMCA and YWCA ... Two weekly newspapers are published, The Christian Weekly and The Christian Times.”⁴

The Christian community in HK has made significant contributions in transforming the barren island into a City of Life.

Being a recipient of blessings for a century, what have HKC done in response to the calling of the Great Commission? How well have HKC scored in the field of global missions in the twenty-first century? What can HKC do in the twenty-second century to become a blessing to other nations and people?

Before 1970, the HKCs were primarily engaged in local evangelism. It was

Footnotes: 1 Siu Lun Lau, The Foundation of Hong Kong Chinese Church: The History of Hong Kong Christian Church, 1842-1866 (Hong Kong: China Graduate School of Theology, 2003), pp.67-68. 2 "Memoir of Mrs. Shuck" <http://bamboo.lib.hku.hk/HKWest/pdf/6.pdf> 3 Chi Wai Ng, ed., Growth Amidst Changes – Studies on Hong Kong Church 2006 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Church Renewal Movement Ltd.), pp.6-12. A 2009 survey is being undertaken in Hong Kong now, and report will be released in early 2010. 4 "Religion in Hong Kong" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Hong_Kong#The_Protestant_community 5 Ng, pp.126-131. 6 The data source is from the Hong Kong Association of Christian Missions. Most of the data can be downloaded from HKACM's website: www.hkacm.org.hk. However, there were some data missing for the year 2005. In any event, the charts still give us an overall picture of the missionary force send out from Hong Kong.

in the 70s, almost after 130 years of the arrival of the first missionary, that a handful of churches and pastors began to talk about the importance, responsibility and urgency of world missions. However, churches and Christians in general were still unfamiliar with world missions due to the lack of teachings, resources and experiences.

The Hong Kong Association of Christian Missions (HKACM) was formed in 1973 and began to educate, facilitate, empower and unite the local churches to engage in overseas and cross-cultural missions. In the last three decades since the formation of HKACM, there have been substantial increases in the number of missionaries, sending agencies, and churches becoming Great Commission Churches.

1. Mission Education and Program in the Church

According to the statistics released by HKACM, there were only six sending agencies in Hong Kong, fifteen churches involved in global missions, and 48 Hong Kong missionaries sent out in the 1970s.

The church should be the cradle of missionaries. Well planned mission education and discipleship programs in the church are the first important step to empower a church to become a Great Commission Church.

Table 1 (shown at the end of this article) contains a portion of the statistics collected during the 2004 City-Wide Church Census.⁵

It is encouraging to discover that in 2004, over 60% of HKC, that is over

700 churches, have regular mission programs, mission Sundays, short-term missions, prayer meetings for global missions, and funding to support missions, a significant increase over 1989.

Over 70% of the churches (over 800 HKC's) have no Mission Sunday School program or trained staff responsible for missions. Without trained staff, it would be hard for church leaders to start a mission Sunday School program. Training the trainers is one way to resolve the deficit.

The census did not focus on the overall direction and objective of the mission program in the church. My own informal survey concludes that most HKC's lack a clear vision for their mission program. A lack of vision and direction will only put the mission education and programs in maintenance mode or cause it to remain as status quo. Church leaders need to pay particular attention in the area of seeking God's guidance on laying out vision, direction, objective and strategy for their mission education and programs.

2. Number of Missionaries

As mentioned above, only 48 Hong Kong Missionaries (HKM) were sent out in the 1970s. It is encouraging to see that the total number increased to 198 in 1998, as shown in Chart 1.⁶ (see at the bottom of this article)

The figure doubled again in the last decade, reaching 443 in 2008. (Note: 2007 shows a big jump in numbers of HKM as HKACM included one non-HKACM group who had been actively

training and sending missionaries for few years already). Taking into account that non-HKACM member reporting is voluntary, the actual number of HKM being sent out is most likely higher than this chart reflects.

With 1,181 churches in HK and 443 active HKM, then the ratio of HKM per church would be 0.38. It would be nice if the ratio is close to or even higher than 1! And with 216,739 Christians worshipping God every week in HK, the ratio of HKM per HK Christian population would 0.002. One could state that there are 489 Christians supporting 1 missionary. The ratio is extremely high, indicating an enormous powerhouse with many spiritual, financial and other resources. What can we do to help the 489 Christians to fully engage in supporting our missionaries?

Between 1998 and 2008, the overall growth rate of missionaries was 12.7%, and the attrition rate was 6.9%. Thus, the net increase was 5.8% or 142 missionaries over the span of 11 years, indicating each year we produced 12 missionaries for God's Kingdom. (See Table 2 at the end of this article)

Understanding the factors contributing to the fluctuation in numbers is needed so that the HKC can be more informed in their design of mission education and programs.

Overall, the attrition rate goes downhill at a very steady rate, except it headed upward last year, while the growth rate took a downturn. The phenomenon is most likely due to the effect of the financial tsunami.

Footnotes 7 "A Concise Report of the 2008 Hong Kong Missionary Census," (Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Association of Christian Mission), p.2.

From the perspective of a HKM, the top seven factors that cause attrition are:

1. Interpersonal conflicts with the team
2. Children's education
3. Problems with the sending organization
4. Personal problems
5. Conflicts with local leaders
6. Health related issues
7. Inadequate field supervision

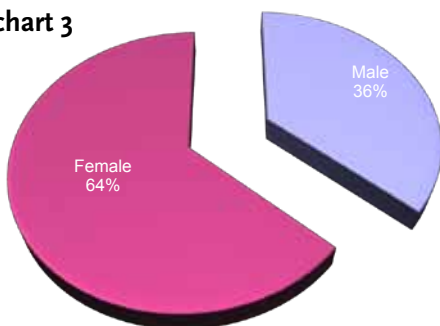
3. Gender and Family

In the past decade, the ratio between male and female HKM is close to 1:2 (Chart 3), and the percentage of single females is one-third of the total HKM force. (Chart 4) Female missionaries are playing a very important role in global missions. While the HKC needs to pray for more single men to "go," more attention should also be given to the needs and care of this lonely group of singles in the field.

The HKACM 2008 census also reports the number of kids that each of the married couples has.⁷ While Chart 5 only shows the percentage, the actual total number of missionary kids (MK) is 424!

Comparing with other sending countries, such as, Canada and U.S.A, the number of HK MKs is not high at all. However, as pointed out in the

chart 3



above section, children's education is the number two killer that sends the missionary family home.

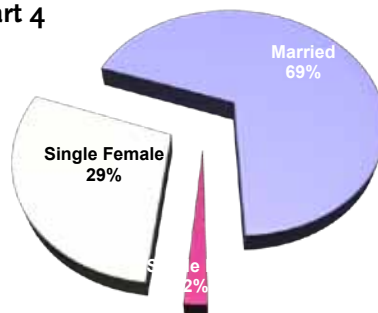
Hong Kong parents are very concerned about their children's education. This is one of the areas where Chinese sending organizations lack the experience and resources. Partnership among the Chinese sending organizations to build a Chinese MK school may be one solution. Another possible solution is partnership with existing International MK schools for a Chinese Track for the HK MKs so that they can keep the language and some elements of the Chinese culture.

4. Sending Arrangement

Although sending a missionary to the field through a mission organization is still the norm, Table 3 (at the end of this article) shows that the trend for HKC to directly send their missionary has also been gaining ground in the last two years. The impact of this trend on the traditional sending organization has yet to be determined.

In the last three years, three major denominations in HK have set up their own sending bodies. The biggest problem that they face is field supervision and support. The report

chart 4



from HKACM's survey makes no comment on the relationship between the attrition rate and the sending arrangement.

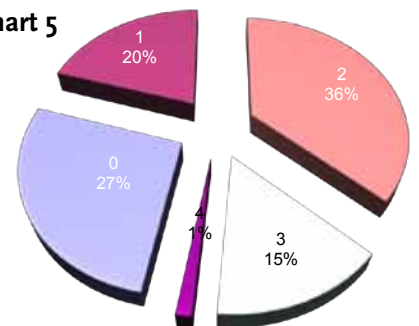
5. Target Group

Table 4 (end of article) shows us that the statement, "HKM always choose to go and serve where the Chinese are," is only half true. On average, only 45% of HKM served among overseas or mainland Chinese. Non-Chinese and multiple groups (more than one people group on the field) added together is slightly more than 52%.

The Census indicted that since 1997, which was the year HK returned to China, interactions between HKC and the churches in China have become more frequent. This has led to more ministry partnership between the two sides. In 2004, over 50% of HKC (900 churches) had visited China and 33.3% (610 churches) had ministry partnerships with the churches in China.

With China adopting a more open-door policy, many Chinese citizens have immigrated to other countries, and millions of Chinese workers are also working in different countries of the world. As the number of Chinese Diaspora grows, the demand for missionaries who can speak their

chart 5

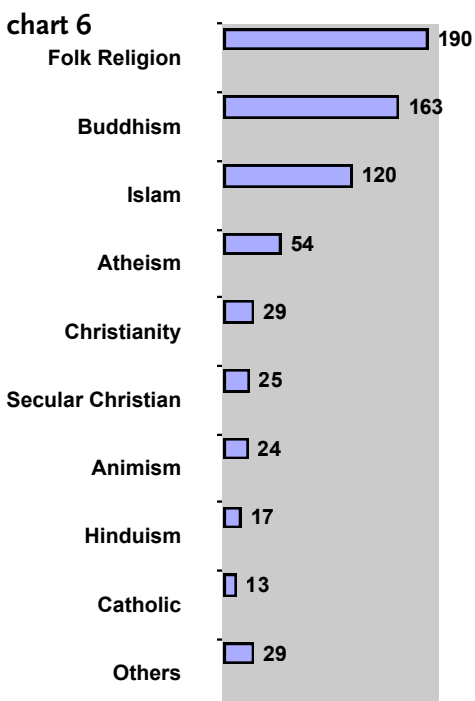


language also grows. Since HKM are basically Chinese, there is natural tendency to draw them to serve among the Chinese Diaspora.

6. Missionary Types

Missionaries can be classified into 4 types, namely, career missionaries, tentmakers, field support staff and short-term missionaries. Most of the HKM are career missionaries, engaged in traditional church planting and evangelism. (Table 5, end of article) However, the world has changed. A lot of countries in the 10/40 window do not welcome career missionaries. However, these countries would welcome professional businessman and technical people. Most of the HKM's are called to the mission field after having already gained professional expertise. Thus, we need to find ways to encourage our church members to go and use their vocation to serve God.

7. Ministry Location



The 443 HKM's are spread out in 70 different countries, with the highest percentage located in Asia (67%), including China, Thailand, Macau and Cambodia. Apart from God's calling, two of the reasons for HKM's to choose Asia are proximity to HK and less cultural distance or differences.

The second largest area of HKM service is Europe (13.32%), primarily England. This is understandable as HK was once a British colony and the HKM are very familiar with the British system, language and culture.

Africa, being the furthest away, both in terms of physical distance and culture from HK, is the third largest location, where 10% of HKM's are working. The percentage actually has been on the rise. In 1998, there were only 11 HKM's in Africa. In 2000, it increased to 27; and last year, the number was 47. The trend is encouraging because it reflects that HKM's are willing to cross a wider cultural gap for the Lord. A recent conference challenged Chinese church leaders, attending from all over the world, to send more Chinese missionaries to Africa. We pray that the leaders from HK will take that challenge seriously and will mobilize more Christians from HK to serve in the 53 countries of Africa.

8. Religion (Chart 6)

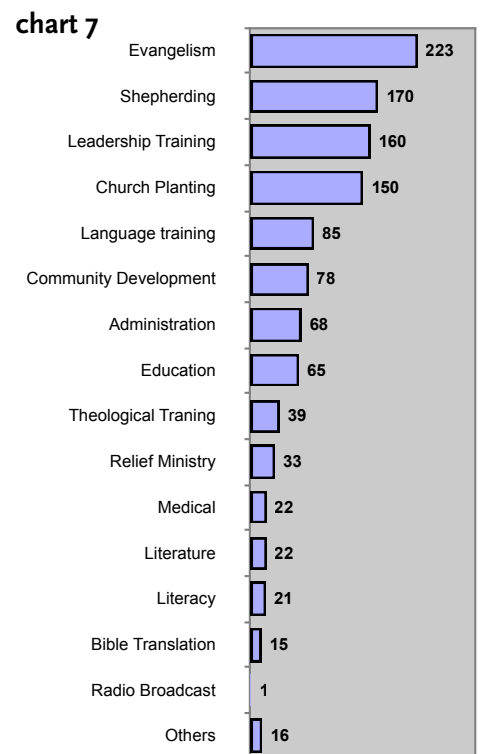
With most of the HKM ministering in Asia, it is understandable that most are working among people groups whose religion is folk religion and Buddhism. Islam is an unreached people group, and it is delightful to learn that 120 HKM (27%) are working among them. Over the last nine years, the increase of

HKMs to Muslims has been about 13%. The terrorist attack of 9/11 is one factor that has drawn the HKC to pray for and send more missionaries to serve among them.

Hinduism is the second largest unreached people group. The percentage of HKM working among them is apparently very low (3.84%). With a population approaching to surpass that of China, India and Hinduism should deserve more of our prayers, attention and missionaries.

9. Ministry (Chart 7)

HKM are primarily working in ministries related to church development, including evangelism (50.34%), shepherding (38.37%), leadership development (36.12%), and church planting (33.86).



Conclusion

It took a long time (130 years) for the HKC to follow the footsteps of Henrietta and Jehu Shuck. But once the HKC picked up the baton, they tried to catch up fast. Over the last 30 years, the number of HKMs has increased from 48 to 443, the number of HKCs involved in sending missionaries jumped from 15 to 341. The location, people group and types of ministries are very diverse. It is also encouraging to find out HKMs are working among the Muslims and in Africa.

Under the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China, but with a "one country, two systems" approach, Hong Kong enjoys a high degree of autonomy and maintains its own currency, legal system, political system, immigration control, rule of the road and other aspects that concern its way of life, including religious freedom. As an international city, Hong Kong is still in a very strategic position to nurture Great Commission Disciples for the Lord to go and make disciples of all nations ●

GLOBAL DIALOGUE, Responses from churches and leaders of mission movements:

How can this church avoid falling into the temptation of going with the "latest decadal mission flavor," or resist so much change that there is no longer continuity for both church and missionaries on field?

Piers Vander, Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church, USA

...The key is to have a good biblical theology of mission... though difficult to achieve. Education of senior pastors and eldership "boards" is probably the best hope we have of avoiding these mistakes.

Paul Ng, Pastor, Singapore

This church must be clear about what and where God is calling them, then focus on doing it. By doing so, they would not end

up chasing every new development in missions. That would preclude them from doing new things when they receive new callings. However some developments are applicable and we should not be afraid to change...

Decio de Carvalho, COMIBAM, Latin America

Change will happen and is good and necessary. Churches should not resist change and in fact must continually consider things that no longer work or serve the overall purpose of their missions outreach. But other side is also true. Well committed, trained and prepared leadership of the church missions program will give it a good basis.

Steve Moore, The Mission Exchange, USA

This question seems to assume the latest decadal mission flavor isn't taking us in a positive direction. The Orality movement

would be labeled by many as a decadal mission flavor but I see it as a very positive initiative. ...

Bruce Huseby, Calvary Church, USA

The church is an organism that is constantly changing, and missions deal with changes that occur almost daily in geographical areas, political systems, team approaches, lifestyles, church dynamics, etc.... There have been areas where the church has not remained consistent: Awareness of the 10-40 window served to awaken the church, but it also cut off many ministries/missionaries who served outside the window. The influence of modernity on the Western church causes us to look to, "the expert" for our answers. The missional movement as a whole focuses on good things like poverty, justice, and the environment, but is mum on the only thing Christ himself promised to build, the church...

GLOBAL DIALOGUE, Responses from churches and leaders of mission movements:

How can the mission-minded local church partner with missionary training programs, and with sending structures?

Paul Ng, Pastor, Singapore

Sending structures and missionary training organizations already have good programs in place, continually updated which can be

helpful to the mission-minded local church. By partnering with these organizations, the local church is able to tap onto these resources.

Bruce Huseby, Calvary Church, USA

Teach church and sending structure should communicate and collaborate in profile testing as well as recommended training. ..

Marina Prins, Mamber Care Consultant, South Africa

A partnership should be formed between the local church, the sending organization, the missionary and the structure on the field. The mission pastor should promote missionary training programs and make sure that missionaries sent by them are well trained and prepared. The local church can also host short mission training sessions at the church.

Item	Mission Education & Program There is ...	1989 (%)	1994 (%)	1999 (%)	2004 (%)	Increment (99-2004)
1	... regular mission programs	46.2	51.1	56.8	60.6	3.8
2	... designated mission committee	28.6	36.9	47.2	52.9	5.7
3	... annual mission conference	n/a	24.1	36.1	33.1	-3.0
4	... Mission Sunday	n/a	58.6	59.9	63.4	3.5
5	... short-term mission	25.3	46.4	51.7	61.9	10.2
6	... Mission Sunday School	n/a	16.5	27.3	27.9	0.6
7	... Missionary Caring Group	n/a	20.9	33.7	37	3.3
8	... approved mission policy	n/a	n/a	37.8	36	-1.8
9	... scheduled publication	n/a	n/a	24.0	25.9	1.9
10	... staff responsible for missions	n/a	n/a	n/a	24.4	n/a
11	... staff with mission training	n/a	n/a	n/a	27	n/a
12	... prayer meetings for missions	n/a	n/a	66.7	69.7	3
13	... funding for missions	46.6	68	63.7	68.3	4.6
14	... missionaries being sent out	n/a	17.2	n/a	28.9	n/a

Year		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Overall Average
Chinese	Count	96	84	114	115	127	132	143	167	174	201	214	45.18
	%	50.80	39.40	44.40	42.60	42.90	44.10	46	46.91	46.27	45.27	48.31	
Non-Chinese	Count	88	97	83	89	92	98	99	122	127	155	145	35.35
	%	46.60	45.60	32.30	33	31.10	32.80	31.80	34.27	33.78	34.91	32.73	
Multiple Groups	Count	5	15	54	55	65	60	60	58	62	62	79	16.07
	%	2.60	7	21	20.40	21.90	20.10	19.30	16.29	16.49	13.96	17.83	
No Reply	Count	n/a	n/a	9	11	12	9	9	n/a	13	26	5	3.50
	%	n/a	n/a	3.50	4.10	4.10	3	2.90	n/a	3.46	5.86	1.13	