

**AN ANALYTICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION  
PROGRAM AT NEW BEGINNINGS CHRISTIAN  
FELLOWSHIP (HONG KONG)**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Background*

In undertaking a project of this nature, at least, two major factors must be considered. One is the researcher's interest and, two, is the beneficiality of the study. The researcher has always been enamored with Christian Education and has deep appreciation of its critical role in the formation of believers' thinking and spirituality. He considers himself a recipient of "exemplary Christian education for Life."

The researcher firmly believes in the project of social transformation and ecumenism. For it to be attainable and sustainable, people's values should be shaped according to the liberating and community-affirming paradigms and principles of the Scriptures as modeled by the Triune God. It may also mean re-affirming, re-constructing as well as de-constructing the foundational beliefs of people. People's minds should be shaped and nurtured towards a transformative and ecumenical mindset. Christian Education plays a pivotal role in this respect.

Scanning notes from seminary classes on Christian Education at the College of Theology, Central Philippine University, the researcher came across these salient understandings:

That *Christian Education* is an intentional process of building up communities of faith to praise God and to serve neighbors for the sake of emancipatory transformation of the world (Duremdes, 2011).

As an intentional process, Christian Education starts in a local church congregation. Of course, people's beliefs and values can be shaped by individual studies and exposures.

But it is in the context of a local church where intentional values formation takes place through its various nurture programs.

The local church promotes different programs to strengthen and develop the believer's faith in or relationship with God. In view of God's loving and redemptive act of salvation in and through Jesus Christ, the Ecclesia (i.e. church) or the Community of the Spirit (Moltmann, 1993) takes upon itself the responsibility of the following tasks:

*Kerygma* (Greek: κήρυγμα) – the *proclamation* of the Word. This task is best done during the preaching or messages of the pastor or priest in the pulpit, in the prayer meeting, and even through group Bible or Scripture study.

*Liturgia* (Greek: Λειτουργία) – the order of *worship* or the manner in which the worship is conducted. It is done with the primary goal of enhancing a divine-human encounter through the praise and adoration of God and the instruction of God's people.

*Diakonia* (Greek: διακονία) – it refers to the multi-faceted *service* or outreach programs of the ecclesia. Among the goals of the local church is to promote outreach programs in various places to spread the Gospel of love, peace, and justice both in words and deeds.

*Koinonia* (Greek: κοινωνία) – meaning *fellowship*, which is very necessary for growth and sustained engagement. It is, also, concerned with the promotion of a meaningful relationship of caring and sharing among the members of the community of God's people.

*Didache* – (Διδαχή) meaning *teaching*. Teaching in the church is a very important ministry. It is said that without *didache*, the church will die. It is the nerve center, next to the presence and empowerment of the Spirit, of a living and dynamic church.

If there was something in the world that should be dealt with perfectly, taught perfectly, it should be the Gospel of Christ. In imparting the lesson of the Gospel, the reflexive capacity must be possessed in order to skillfully and meaningfully apply what is revealed from the Scriptures. The Holy Bible is a treasure trove of life's lessons that transports believers to Christ-like maturity; to a life of righteousness, here and now, in the world. Christian Education plays an important role, not only in the maturing of believers, but in shaping believers' minds for a responsible and transformative Christian witness in society.

Moreover, the characteristic of our society is a big stumbling block for the journeying believer. Society is a picture of brokenness, fragmentation, divisiveness and apathy. Christian Education is the tool through which God can continue to lead people out from the “bondages of sin” and into “everlasting life in all its fullness.” Again, this sad reality calls for or affirms the critical role of Christian Education towards the project of individual, social, and environmental wholeness.

Karen B. Tye, a professor of Christian Education at Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, USA, writes in her book *Basics of Christian Education (2000)* that the Foundations of Christian Education are:

- ✠ Concept                    - “what” is Christian Education?
- ✠ Purpose                    - “why” do we educate?
- ✠ Context                    - “where” do we educate?

- ✚ Content - “what to teach” in Christian Education?
- ✚ Participants - “whom” do we teach?
- ✚ Process/Method - “how” do we teach?

The *scope* of Christian Education is with children, youth, and adults incorporating the application of learning in Church Arts such as music, choir, drama, and dance. Christian Education is also concerned with *Leader Development* through skills training and retreats.

There are four basic goals of Christian Education namely: “*gate-keeping*”, *consolidating*, *capacitating*, and *internalizing*.

*Gate-keeping* introduces to “seekers” the rudiments of the faith, i.e. bringing to them the fundamentals or basics of the faith. *Consolidating* is the deepening of the knowledge and understanding of Christian faith among believers. *Capacitating* is bringing about a state of capacity to be “able to do something about the faith one understands.” *Internalizing*, on the other hand, is providing venues for practicing the faith. The best venue to concretize faith is with neighbors.

Christian Education has *functions* as well. The Book of Isaiah (chapter 50) in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, offers that Christian Education is to be *for* the education of the faith, education for healing, education for self-actualization, education for decisions. Education of the faith means the nurture of faith in God, in this case, the Christian faith. Education for healing means that Christian nurture is for the promotion of total wholeness of peoples and communities. Self-actualization here refers both to the discovery and development of God-given potentials among believers. And by education for decisions it means that Christian Education is to empower people to decide for that which are loving, just, true and beautiful both within and without the church.

The *Contents* of Christian Education are as follows: (a) Making Meaning, (b) Nurturing Hope, (c) Building Communities of Faith, which exude sensitivity, respect for difference (because people are differently-abled), hospitable places, communal lifestyle, and intergenerational recognition.

The guiding principle of Christian Education is a reminder that (a) teaching is *not* an act of verbal manipulation; (b) it thrives in an atmosphere of mutual trust; and (c) it sifts the essentials from the trivial for trivial has nothing to do with Spirituality and new behavior. Learning is learning only if it resulted to new behavior in the light of the revealed truth in Jesus Christ as embodied in the Scriptures.

### *Objectives of the Study*

This study is conducted to analytically describe the Christian Education Program of New Beginnings Christian Fellowship (Hong Kong).

Specifically, this study aims to present and describe:

1. the Overseas Filipino Workers' (OFWs) phenomenon and its realities in Hong Kong;
2. the church profile and demographic characteristics of the members of New Beginnings Christian Fellowship (Hong Kong);
3. the basic beliefs and doctrines of New Beginnings Christian Fellowship (Hong Kong) as a church with a Baptist Heritage;
4. the program thrusts, generic liturgy, and calendar of annual and weekly activities of New Beginnings Christian Fellowship (Hong Kong);
5. the Christian Education/Discipleship Model adopted by New Beginnings Christian Fellowship (Hong Kong).

## *Methodology*

This study uses a descriptive research. The aim of descriptive research is to verify formulated hypotheses that refer to the present situation in order to elucidate it.

## *Findings and Conclusions*

1. The Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) phenomenon is real and Hong Kong is among the countries who experience it. The Filipinos who go to Hong Kong to make a living as domestic helpers are the modern day heroes of the Philippine family unit and economy. The physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological struggles of being a second class citizen in a country that is not yours can take the joy away from living. Yet, the members of the church called New Beginnings Christian Fellowship (Hong Kong) choose to continue living for God's glory amidst these realities. It has been a joy to learn the circumstances out of which this Convention Baptist church thrives. The quality of the fellowship at NBCF (HK) is welcoming and accepting, especially to the newcomers.
2. As an OFW church, the demographics of NBCF (Hong Kong) reflect the nature of the work that Filipinos occupy. It was mostly women who come and work in Hong Kong as domestic workers.
3. The warmth of the fellowship is remarkably observable. The dedication and commitment of its members is also very notable. Around 90% of its worship attendance stays for the care group sessions. And around 30% is enrolled in the Discipleship Training courses. Furthermore, around 50% are faithfully giving their tithes and the rest are trying to albeit irregularly.
4. NBCF (Hong Kong) exudes a Baptist heritage and is very well organized thanks to their pastoral staff and ministry assistant group (MAG). The congregation observes a yearly calendar of activities similar to mainline protestant churches of today.

5. The Christian Education program, adopted by NBCF (Hong Kong), proves to be a good model for Overseas Foreign Missionwork. It excels in providing her members with care groups, graduated discipleship trainings, sensitive support groups, and seminars on special topics.

6. The music ministry needs strengthening and like most self-supporting congregations, it has many shortcomings and limitations. NBCF (Hong Kong) has something positive to offer to other churches, especially in the area of CE programs for adults. The Christian Education at NBCF (Hong Kong) is planned and organized; the contents are intentional; it is broad and holistic in scope as well as responsive to the needs of its predominantly OFW members. NBCF (HK) as a church has a unique edge and vantage point that may prove beneficial to other CPBC member churches.

7. The CPU College of Theology and other Schools for Ministry under the Convention are encouraged to send their students for exposures or Field Work assignments in the church. The experience would be beneficial, inspiring, enlightening and challenging.

8. Emergent Christian Education is affirmed at NBCF (Hong Kong). The church pioneers and leadership paid heaps of intensive attention to the emerging needs of the Filipino that travels to Hong Kong to work as a domestic helper or driver. When ministers discern that a particular issue has spiritual and lifestyle implications that were not confronted and dealt with during Sunday School or church, they addressed the issue by educating themselves with good Christian material.