

Five ways to help involvement of local church for Hong Kongers

Finding a suitable church is one of the issues for Hong Kong newcomers. The main barrier for them is often about language. Hong Kong Christians care about the 'message' in the Sunday Service and 'sharing' in groups - they would like to share their faith in unison. So, helping them in listening to the message and joining in worship is a way to help them get involved in church. For non-Christians going to church, they would like to be helped in their new life - meeting friends and being helped in a variety of general and emergency situations. As a HK-welcoming church, you can do some easy things to help them become involved in your church and Sunday service.

1 Worship preparation

Prepare a list of the songs which are often sung in your church - helping Hong Kongers to know more about the songs will help them dedicate themselves in worshipping God. Encourage the newcomers to listen to these worship songs on YouTube or other media. You can even arrange some events to sing and teach the songs with your congregation and Hong Kongers.

2 Message with PowerPoint

For Hong Kongers, most of them learned English in Hong Kong; however, they didn't have the chance to listen and speak the language. PowerPoint is a useful tool for them to read and see the bible verse and also understand the message. If you can do more, you might prepare some simple notes and send to them before or after the Sunday Service to help Hong Kongers as they study the message. Where possible, it is helpful if you speak more slowly or speak with simple words - recognising that time is limited and you will need to be mindful of the expectations of the rest of the congregation.

3 Integration groups or event

a Groups in the church

We encourage churches to develop some Cantonese groups for mutual sharing, especially if some of the Hong Kongers are very weak in English. 'Sharing in Unison' is important for some Hong Kong newcomers. They could share their thoughts about the message given in the Sunday Service and their life, and even pray in their own language. It's also fantastic if someone from the church would like to join in these local groups.

b Serve in the Church

Many Hong Kong newcomers served in their church in Hong Kong - maybe they were worship leaders, group leaders, helpers in hospitality or even deacons. To help them become involved in your church, invite them to help in some roles or at some events. They may have great ideas to share - especially for Hong Kong projects.

c *Integrate into the local groups*

A 'culture exchange' event is a good way to share something of people's culture. I joined an international Christmas party in The Gate Baptist Church. It was amazing to share food, games and make friends with people from a different culture. You could also use the pub quiz that we provide to get to know more about Hong Kongers. I do think that using your creativity to offer other events is a brilliant way to welcome and involve the newcomers.

4 Language practice

The Baptists Together Hong Kong Response Project is planning events such as a language café – which would offer more than just an English class, but an opportunity to share together on topics such as culture, general essentials, faith and love etc. These would not only be culture sharing but would enable conversation to be practised. We aim to make them more practical and useful, both for those gathering in-person or virtually. Please contact me if you are interested in joining us, or can recommend a potential English teacher.

5 Emotional support

A deeper way to help the Hong Kongers is to support them emotionally - surely homesickness is an issue for the immigrants. Even though most of the Hong Kongers are not holding a refugee visa to enter the UK, they may have left their home without planning or in rush because of the political situation in Hong Kong. Getting used to living in this new country can be an emotional time for them. Listening to their story and praying is important. Providing some support groups can be particularly helpful if you have someone with professional counselling training in the church.

Finally, please don't hesitate to contact me on sshek@baptist.org.uk for further information. It is great to hear more about your stories of offering hospitality.