

Understanding & Acting:

THE URGENT NEED FOR A CHURCH CENSUS IN DIASPORA CHURCHES TODAY



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Do we truly grasp the current state of the Church?

Which congregations are growing or declining? Who is showing up regularly, and who is fading away quietly? How are churches adapting to the changing cultural and religious landscape, especially in communities where the Church no longer leads public life? These are questions pastors and lay leaders carry into staff meetings, elder boards, and prayer in Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), and Australia, as secularization and migration reshape local realities. A church census is essential for church leaders today, as it can provide answers to these questions.

These are immediate, practical challenges—not abstract

questions. This kind of census is one of the tools to address them, giving pastors a shared language and actionable data to understand their context and shape ministry strategies. In short, it helps us replace hunches with a true picture.

A census may seem mundane; done well, it gives churches what they most lack: Clarity. Like a national census for governments, such work provides an essential snapshot – revealing where the Church stands, how it is evolving, and what it truly needs to flourish. Because ministry is contextual, local understanding is vital. Clarity has to be local – parish to postal code, county to council, suburb to major metropolitan areas – so that decisions reflect people, not assumptions.

Why the Big Picture Matters

Census findings at national and regional levels reveal trends that individual congregations cannot see alone:

- Where churches are thriving, dying, or struggling
- Transformations in age groups, ethnic communities, and ministry models
- Where to plant churches, train leaders, or launch outreach

Consider Canada's 2021 national census: less than six in ten Canadians were Christian (53.3%) while 34.6% reported no religion – down from 77% Christian in 2001.¹ In the US, recent national surveys find approximately 62–65% Christian and approximately 29% unaffiliated.² These headlines can feel discouraging, but they also tell us exactly why careful, coordinated census efforts matter.

The Local Church: A Reflection and a Guide

A closer look tells a different story. In immigrant-heavy Canadian cities like Toronto and Vancouver, new arrivals are quietly sustaining and renewing local churches.³ Similar patterns exist in the UK (e.g., African/Caribbean and Asian networks in London and the Midlands),⁴ in US metro areas with dense immigrant congregations (e.g., New York City, Los Angeles, and the Bay Area),⁵ and in Australia, where multilingual congregations in Sydney and Melbourne reflect migration's impact on worship and leadership.⁶

Beyond national trends, local census work provides congregations with a clear mirror. It shows who they really are – who's present, who is not, which outreaches work, and which need review. For example:

- Is our congregation getting younger or older?
- Are we losing the second generation?
- Do we act in ministry out of insight or assumptions?

When leaders use the data, guesswork gives way to purpose. Congregations can act proactively rather than reactively. Leaders can name what is actually happening and plan ministries that meet people where they are.

A Wake-Up Call – and Opportunity – for Diaspora Churches

For diaspora communities (Chinese, Korean, Latino, African, and others), this work is especially crucial. These churches navigate heritage and relevance, generational divides, and broader society. They are vibrant but underrepresented in national church discourse and theological education. Their voices, contributions, and struggles are often overlooked.

Systematic census work changes this. It builds visibility and an accurate account of the Church. It allows diaspora churches to:

- Highlight their presence and impact
- Plan leadership succession across generations
- Understand evolving needs
- Move from survival to mission

The UK's 2022 church census offers a key example. Unlike other historic churches, which were still in decline, London's Black-

majority churches were thriving with high intergenerational participation.⁷ This trend, rarely discussed nationally, emerged only through deliberate data collection. In other words, if we don't measure it, we don't see – and if we don't see, we can't steward.

What would we learn if Chinese, Filipino, and Black churches across North America coordinated a shared census? What hidden assets or urgent needs might we see? If a similar effort gathered diaspora churches in the English-speaking countries, what shared insights could guide ministry across borders?

From Silence to Strategy

Participating in a church census is not mere administration; it is a ministry discipline. It helps congregations from reacting to planning with foresight. It is a practical way to love our congregations and neighbours with wisdom.

For diaspora churches, the benefits multiply. The data bridges generations, guiding language ministries and leadership to serve both first- and second-generation members. It also reveals hidden needs, prompting churches to equip young leaders for today's ministry. Boards and elders gain common facts that foster unity in decision-making.

Shared data creates shared solutions. Results can reframe mission from self-preservation to community engagement, raise visibility in national faith narratives, and enable timely learning across networks.

What's at Stake?

If diaspora churches skip this work, their unique stories and needs stay hidden, risking further marginalization in training, pastoral care, and public discussion. Inside the church, a lack of data leads to missed opportunities, such as strategies to address youth attrition, aging leadership, and misaligned priorities. With census results in hand, leaders can align vision, budget, staffing, and partnerships with reality. The real question for church leaders is not whether to take part in a church census, but:

- Can we afford to lead without knowing who we are or who we are leaving behind?
- Can we afford to guess, when we could know and care better?

A Calling to Stewardship

Church census isn't about numbers for numbers' sake; it's about people. It is faithful stewardship – of the people God has put in our care, the resources we have been given, and the mission to which we are called.

It tells the story of God's work in the Church as it changes through generations.

Done together, a shared census ensures diaspora churches are not forgotten but are co-authors of Christianity's future. It is a simple, concrete way to serve Christ's one Church across our cities.



Invitation

The Centre for Global Chinese Church Research (CGCCR) invites pastors, church boards, and ministry teams to participate in the Global Chinese Church Census. Join us as research partners to map congregations across Canada, the UK, the US, and Australia; to identify needs and strengths; and to share practical insights across our networks. Add your congregation's voice to the story – so together we can plan with discernment, invest in the next generation, and strengthen the Church's witness in our cities.

As research partners, you will help by (1) sharing a brief congregational profile and (2) receiving a concise report for your leadership team. Ready to participate? Register your congregation here (<https://shorturl.at/rkPaT>).



Prefer email? Contact us at cgccr@cgst.edu – we're glad to help.

- 1 "The Canadian Census: A Rich Portrait of the Country's Religious and Ethnocultural Diversity." *Statistics Canada* (October 26, 2022). No pages. Online: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026b-eng.htm>.
- 2 Smith et al. "Religious Landscape Study: Executive Summary." *Pew Research Centre* (February 26, 2025). No pages. Online: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/02/26/religious-landscape-study-executive-summary/>.
- 3 Cornelissen, Louis. "Religiosity in Canada and Its Evolution from 1985 to 2019." *Statistics Canada* (October 28, 2021). No pages. Online: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00010-eng.htm>.
- 4 Brierley, Peter, ed. *UK Church Statistics No 3: 2018 Edition*. ADBC Publishers, 2017.
- 5 Grammich et al. "2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Adherents Study." *Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies*. Lenexa, Kansas: Harvest Graphics, 2023.
- 6 "Ethnic Diversity in Australian Churches." *NCLS Research*. No pages. Online: <https://www.ncls.org.au/articles/ethnic-diversity-in-australian-churches/>.
- 7 Refer to footnote 4.

理解與行動： 當今離散教會 迫切需要 教會普查

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我們是否真正掌握教會目前的狀況？

哪些堂會正在成長，哪些正在萎縮？誰穩定參與聚會，又有哪群體不知不覺地逐漸流失？當教會不再主導公共生活，教會如何適應不斷變遷的文化和宗教環境？隨著世俗化與人口遷移正在重塑各地處境，這些問題皆被加拿大、英國、美國與澳洲的牧者與平信徒領袖帶進同工會議、長執會，甚至禱告之中。而對當今的教會領袖而言，教會普查至為關鍵，因它能夠提供具體答案。

以上並非抽象的問題，而是迫切又真實的挑戰。普查正是回應這些挑戰的工具之一，為牧者提供共同的語言和實用的數據，幫助他們理解自身處境，並制定具體的事工策略。普查呈現教會的真實面貌，將幫助我們取代以往僅憑直覺的判斷。

教會普查或許看似平凡，但若執行得宜，卻能給予教會最缺乏的——清晰度。正如政府進行全國人口普查一樣，這項工作能提供一幀重要的剪影，揭示教會的現況、演化，以及真正需要發展的要素。由於事工需要因地制宜，對當地的理解便成關鍵。從堂區郵政編碼、從郡縣到議會、從郊區到大都會區——普查帶來的清晰度必須是「在地的」，使決策建立於人們的實況，而非臆測。

宏觀視角的重要性

全國與地區層面的普查結果，能揭示單一堂會無法獨自察覺的整體趨勢，包括：

- 哪些教會正在蓬勃發展、走向衰落，或處於掙扎之中
- 年齡結構、族裔群體與事工模式的轉變
- 在何處植堂、培育領袖，或推動外展事工最為合適

以加拿大2021年全國人口普查為例：自稱為基督徒的比例已降至不足六成（53.3%），而表示沒有宗教信仰的人口達34.6%；相比2001年有77%基督徒的比例大幅下降：¹在美國，近期的全國調查顯示約有62–65%人口為基督徒，約29%無宗教信仰。²這些數據可能令人沮喪，但它們同時清楚地說明了為何審慎而有系統的教會普查工作如此重要。

地方教會：反思與指引

更深入的觀察會呈現不同的面貌。在移民密集的加拿大城市，如多倫多和溫哥華，新移民正悄然支撐並更新本地教會。³類似的情況亦見於英國（例如倫敦及英格蘭中部的非洲/加勒比和亞洲教會網絡）、⁴美國移民會眾密集的大都會區（如紐約市、洛杉磯和灣區），⁵以及在澳洲雪梨和墨爾本的多語堂會，正反映出移民對敬拜及領導模式所帶來的深遠影響。⁶

除了國家層面的趨勢，在地的普查工作為堂會提供一面清晰的鏡子，顯示出其真實面貌——誰參與其中，誰缺席；哪些外展事工奏效，哪些需要重新檢視。例如：

- 我們的會眾越趨向年輕化，還是老化？
- 我們是否正在流失第二代？
- 我們的事工是基於洞察還是假設？

當領袖善用數據，便毋須臆測，可以專注於目標之上。堂會得以主動行動，而非被動回應；領袖也就能夠直指實況，並規劃符合人們實際處境的事工。

對離散教會的啟示：是警醒，也是機遇

對於離散群體（如華人、韓裔、拉丁裔及非洲裔等）而言，普查工作尤為關鍵。這些教會在傳承文化與回應時代之間尋求平衡，同時面對世代鴻溝以及更廣泛的社會處境。她們充滿活力，但在全國性的教會論述與神學教育中卻代表性不足；其聲音、貢獻與掙扎往往被忽視。

系統性的普查工作扭轉了這一點。它建立教會的能見度和準確描述，使離散教會得以：

- 展現自身的存在與影響力
- 規劃跨世代的領袖傳承
- 理解不斷變化的實際需要
- 從「求存」邁向「使命導向」的事工

英國2022年的教會普查提供了一個重要例證。當其他歷史悠久的教會持續衰落之際，倫敦以黑人為主體的教會反而蓬勃發展，且有高度的跨世代參與。⁷這一趨勢在全國層面鮮少被討論，唯有刻意地蒐集數據才得以浮現。換言之，若我們不去量度，就無法看見；若看不見，也就無法好好作管家的職分。

若北美各地的華人、菲律賓裔與黑人教會能合作進行普查，我們會學到甚麼？又會發現哪些隱藏優勢或迫切需要？若類似的工作延伸至英語系國家的離散教會，有哪些跨越地域的共同洞見，能引導未來的事工方向？

不再沉默，主動籌劃

參與教會普查不只是行政工作，更是一項實踐使命的操練。它幫助堂會從以往被動回應，轉向具前瞻性的規劃；也是以智慧去愛教會群體與鄰舍的一種實際方式。

對離散教會而言，效益倍增。數據能連結世代，引導多語言事工並領導牧者服事第一、二代會眾；又能揭示隱藏的需要，促使教會為當今使命裝備年輕領袖。執事會與長老亦能掌握共同的事實基礎，促進決策中的合一。

有了共享的數據，就能找出一起前行的方法。普查結果將重塑教會使命，脫離維持現狀的常態，積極走進社群；並讓離散教會的信仰經驗在國家層面的信仰論述（faith narratives）中被看見與聽見，促成教會網絡之間彼此學習。



迫在眉睫

若離散教會跳過這項工作，其獨特的故事與實際需要便一直被埋藏，進而在培訓、牧養關懷與公共討論中，面臨更深的邊緣化風險。在教會內部，缺乏數據往往導致錯失良機，例如未能及時回應青年流失、領導層老化，以及事工優先次序錯位等問題。當領袖手中握有普查結果，便能使異象、預算、人力配置與夥伴關係更貼近真實處境。對教會領袖而言，真正的問題並非是否參與教會普查，而是：

- 在不了解自身也不知悉哪些群體被遺忘的情況下，我們是否仍能有效領導教會？
- 當我們有更好的方法去理解和關注處境時，是否還要盲目猜測？

管家職分的呼召

教會普查並非純為冰冷數字，而是對人的關切。這是忠心的管家職分——忠實地管理上主所託付給我們的群體、所賜予的資源，以及所蒙召承擔的使命。

它訴說著上主在教會中作工，隨著世代更迭而不斷更新的故事。共同完成的普查確保離散教會不再被遺忘，更要成為未來基督信仰的合撰者。這是一種簡單而具體的方式，讓我們在各自的城市中，服事主內合一的教會。

- 1 "The Canadian Census: A Rich Portrait of the Country's Religious and Ethnocultural Diversity." *Statistics Canada* (October 26, 2022). No pages. Online: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026b-eng.htm>.
- 2 Smith et al. "Religious Landscape Study: Executive Summary." *Pew Research Centre* (February 26, 2025). No pages. Online: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/02/26/religious-landscape-study-executive-summary/>.
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邀請

世界華人教會研究中心 (Centre for Global Chinese Church Research, CGCCR) 誠邀牧者、教會執事會及事工團隊參與「世界華人教會普查」。邀請您成為研究夥伴，與我們一同勾畫加拿大、英國、美國與澳洲各地華人堂會的全貌，辨識需要與優勢，並在教會網絡之間分享具體實用的洞見。讓您堂會的聲音成為這個故事的一部分，好讓我們一起以辨識力規劃未來，培育下一代並加強教會在城市中的見證。

作為研究夥伴，您將 (1) 協助我們提供一份簡要的堂會概況資料；以及 (2) 收取一份供領導團隊參考的精要報告。準備好參與了嗎？請在此為您的堂會登記，



亦歡迎電郵至 cgccr@cgst.edu，我們樂意協助。

- 4 Brierley, Peter, ed. *UK Church Statistics No 3: 2018 Edition*. ADPC Publishers, 2017.
- 5 Grammich et al. "2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Adherents Study." *Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies*. Lenexa, Kansas: Harvest Graphics, 2023.
- 6 "Ethnic Diversity in Australian Churches." *NCLS Research*. No pages. Online: <https://www.ncls.org.au/articles/ethnic-diversity-in-australian-churches/>.
- 7 Refer to footnote 4.



News and Prayer Requests 消息及代禱

■ Lay Theological Education Course Enrollment

Please pray for the enrollment of our upcoming LTE courses, "History of Evangelicalism" and "Faith in the Civic Society". Pray that students would not only gain historical and social insights but also grow in their ability to discern God's will within their local communities. May these courses equip brothers and sisters to live out a robust faith that is both biblically grounded and contextually relevant.

■ 信徒神學教育課程招生

請為即將開辦的《教會歷史——何謂福音派教會？》以及《新公民——在西方民主政制中活出信仰》課程招生代禱。求上主使學員不僅能在歷史與社會層面上有所認識，也能在各自的處境中更敏銳地分辨祂的心意。願這些課程裝備弟兄姊妹，活出既扎根於聖經又能回應當代處境的整全信仰。

■ DMin Program Development

Please pray for wisdom, discernment, and unity as our team continues the process of setting up the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) program. Pray that God will guide the curriculum design to be biblically grounded, contextually relevant, and practically beneficial for pastoral leaders serving overseas Chinese churches.

■ Participation in the Research Project

As the Centre for Global Chinese Church Research (CGCCR) moves forward, please pray that Chinese churches and Christians will be enthusiastic in participating in our research project. May God grant openness, collaborations, and genuine interest among pastors and congregations, and use this research to bless and strengthen the wider Chinese church community.

■ Research Ethics Approval

Please pray for the successful application and approval of our research ethics submission at McMaster University. May the process be smooth and provide a firm foundation for our upcoming data collection.

■ 籌備教牧學博士課程

請為教牧學博士 (DMin) 課程的籌備代禱。求上主在規劃與發展的每一個環節中，賜下智慧與引導，使課程設計能合乎聖經及回應處境，並實際幫助牧者服事海外華人教會。

■ 研究計劃的參與度

隨著「世界華人教會研究中心」(CGCCR) 的事工推進，請為華人教會及信徒能積極參與本研究計劃代禱。求上主賜下開放的心懷與協作配搭的精神，使研究成果能祝福並建立更廣泛的華人教會群體。

■ 研究倫理審批

請為我們向麥馬士達大學 (McMaster University) 遞交的研究倫理申請獲批代禱。願審批過程順利，為即將進行的數據收集奠定穩固基礎。

2026 Financial Needs 2026 財政需要

To respond to the pastoral needs of Chinese churches worldwide, CGST Toronto is fully committed to planning several key initiatives. These include a research project addressing the unique challenges faced by overseas Chinese churches, the development of a networking and support platform for pastors, the design of a Doctor of Ministry program tailored for overseas Chinese church leaders, and the launch of a series of accessible theological education courses. The projected budget for 2026 is CAD 600,000. We warmly invite brothers and sisters to lift this financial need in prayer and to consider supporting the ministry through your offerings, partnering together to bless Chinese churches across the globe.

為回應普世華人教會在牧養上的需求，中神多倫多正全力規劃多項事工，具體包含針對海外華人教會獨特牧養挑戰的研究計畫、創建教牧人員互動交流的平台、設計專為海外華人牧者開設的教牧學博士課程，以及推廣一系列普及神學教育課程。2026年預計經費為加幣60萬元，懇請各位弟兄姊妹在禱告中記念此項財務需要，並考慮以奉獻支持，共同祝福全球華人教會。

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