

Madison Chinese Church Plant

October 10, 2007

History:

In the spring of 2006, the FLD office was contacted by Pastor Henry Chou about a group of Chinese believers in Madison who were interested in starting a church or a worship service. This communication eventually came my way because I am in Madison and have had some experience with cross-cultural church planting.

Henry Chou was then the president of the Association of North American Chinese Evangel Free Churches. He came to Madison and visited with the interested families. We met and I was able to bring him to the FLD spring conference where he met members of the SEED team and district leadership.

The lead couple in Madison is Dr. Wingkai (Anthony) Cheung and his wife Joni. In June 2006 a Chinese (Mandarin) Bible Study was started at Bethany. Because the outreach was with mainland Chinese immigrants, many of whom work in restaurants, they held the study at 10:00pm. There were several new believers who came to the Lord through this group.

Bethany was asked to allow the Chinese Fellowship to meet for a worship service. From February 2007 to the present, there has been a worship service at Bethany in Chinese (sometimes both in Mandarin and Cantonese). Lay leaders for Milwaukee Chinese Christian Church have provided the sermons since that time. On the second Sunday of each month, I preach with translation and we have communion.

At the first worship service we held a baptism service for some of the first new believers. In September 2007, we held another baptismal service.

We began to meet in late 2006 with Wingkai, Joni, Hongyang Yao and Jeff Ting and myself as a Steering Committee. We realized that there were two options. The ministry could remain a fellowship under the umbrella of Bethany, or they could choose to move toward affiliation with the FLD as a Church Plant. At that time we did not know what would be the better course. It did seem to the group that forming a congregation with a Chinese pastor would be key to success in this effort. We also began to talk about a vision statement and other leadership issues.

The Chinese Fellowship was added as a line item in the Bethany budget for 2007. We set an initial amount of \$6,000 for expenses and speaker fees for the year and the church agreed to hold the Chinese Service offerings separate so we could track the giving. Attendance has been about 20 to 25 on Sundays, and the giving has grown to be about \$600/week for the past 2 or 3 months. (Thorough August giving has been \$12,630 and expenses only \$1,950 as the lay speakers usually do not wish to receive an honorarium.) I believe that this fellowship can be reasonably expected to fund a sustainable congregation from their own giving, once the congregation is established.

Recent:

This leadership group has met with Ray Olson three times. And we have come to the place where they would like to apply to the FLD/SEED Commission to be a church plant with the EFCA.

We have formed a Provisional Leadership Team:

Wingkai Cheung – Chairman

Jeff Ting –Treasurer

Hongyang Yao – Secretary

Joni Cheung – member.

We have decided to form a Steering Committee would add to the PLT the following members:

Ray Olson – FLD

Dave Carlson – Bethany EFC

John Wang – Milwaukee Chinese Christian Church, Elder

Henry Chou is not able to help at that level, but he remains an informal advisor to this group.

There are believed to be as many as 9,000 Chinese speaking residents in Madison. This is largely due to the influence of the University of Wisconsin. There is one non-denomination congregation on the West Side of Madison. There are a number of Chinese speaking attendees at Blackhawk, some of whom are participants in either Life Groups or the International Student group. There are some who will prefer to be part of an English language ministry, but there are others who will best be able to serve and grow in a Chinese Language ministry.

One of the goals that has been identified is that this group will want to have evangelism as a high priority. They see opportunists among students, long term residents, as well as with parents of students or workers who often come to the US for a period of several months.

I am totally in favor of this effort as it has already shown fruit in evangelism, as a core community is well established and as the finances for a church plant seem to be quite positive.

Sincerely,

David E. Carlson, Pastor
Bethany EFC, Madison
pastordavec@tds.net