

**The Urban Face of Megachurch Leadership:
A Comparative and Quantitative Analyses of Megachurch
Leadership in the Context of Urban Centers in the Philippines¹**

by Joel Agpalo Tejado

Introduction

Megachurch pastors in the Global South play an important role in mediating the sacred to their adherents in the context of rapidly changing urbanization, secularization, and globalization of metropolitan cities. Therefore, how megachurch leadership thinks, behaves, and practice spiritual leadership in their environment is a question that is worth answering. Expanding the survey questionnaires of Bird and Tumma of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research on Megachurches (Bird and Tumma 2020, 26) by the scholars of the Templeton Megachurch Project (TMCP) and using the Qualtrics online survey template, we interviewed leaders and compared their doctrinal beliefs about the Scriptures, discipleship and Christian life, beliefs about charisms, attitudes about ancestors, Satan and his demons, attitudes toward government, finances, response to social issues such as gender and sexuality, socio-political engagement, and responses to COVID-19. Two case studies of megachurch leadership were chosen to advance our knowledge about the nature of megachurch leadership in the Philippines: Christ Commission Fellowship (CCF) and Victory Christian Fellowship (VCF). Between these two case studies, there are no significant differences as to what they believe and practice as spiritual leaders. However, we provide empirical evidence in our findings to assert that these two groups of megachurch leaders are creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial religious actors who are shaping the religious landscape in the Philippines.

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The Historical Formations of CCF and VCF in the Urban Center Metro Manila, Philippines

Christ Commission Fellowship

Christ Commission Fellowship (CCF) is a megachurch planted in one of the business hubs of Metro Manila, with a staggering membership of 110,000 people who worship at the ten-story building in Frontera Verde in Pasig City. Pasig City is the eighth-largest city in the Philippines, with a population of 755,300. In 1982, the pastor, Peter Tan-chi and Deonna, started a Bible Study fellowship with three other couples in Brookside Subdivision in Cainta Rizal. As they grew in number, the Bible study moved to the garage of Loreto Carbonel in San Juan, Metro Manila. This Bible Study fellowship became a core group of forty business people and professionals with their families. They began their first Sunday worship at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) and formed the Christ Commission Fellowship in 1984. In 1987, they transferred from one theatre to a bigger theatre as attendance increased. In 1988, CCF occupied the 4,500 seats of the Philippines International Convention Center (PICC) in Pasay City, then moved to the Country Club of Valle Verde in Pasig City until CCF found its new home in St. Francis Hall in Ortigas Center in 1997. During this period, CCF was steadily growing as an influential megachurch in Metro Manila.

With an influx of worshipers from south of Metro Manila, CCF in Sucat Road in Paranaque was formed and established as the first satellite congregation in 1994. In 2000, new CCF satellite congregations began to emerge in Metro Manila and other provinces. As CCF grew and spread its influence in other major cities of the Philippines, CCF congregations were planted in Pampanga, Cebu, Bukidnon, and Davao, along with CCF in Alabang, Pasig in Ever Gotesco, Malolos Bulacan, and Marikina. In 2006, CCF Singapore became the first international CCF congregation.

Peter Tan-chi, the pastor, and the leadership team dreamed of a mega-worship hall for two decades. In 2008, they held a groundbreaking ceremony for a ten-thousand-seat auditorium in a ten-story permanent worship hall for CCF. The magnificent structure in Frontera Verde in Ortigas Center, Pasig City, was a four-year design by a young Filipino-Chinese architect, Daniel Go, from the University of Santo Thomas. Five years after its groundbreaking ceremony, CCF officially transferred its church offices and worship services to the new center. With its growing influence in the Philippines' religious landscape, CCF started an online live-streaming worship service. As a result, many CCF satellite churches were born in Metro Manila and other provinces. In 2012, CCF expanded

its influence and aggressively planted satellite churches overseas in Auckland, Paris, Toronto, and Los Angeles.

Celebrating its 36th anniversary in 2020, CCF estimated that they have 155,000 members and seventy-five satellite congregations in the Philippines and forty overseas, ten-thousand small groups nationwide, and thirty-three-thousand house churches in thirty countries (CCF 2022 at 0.28-0.42). Following the first-century church's indigenous leadership model of ministries without foreign affiliations and financial support, CCF is a rising megachurch in the Philippines, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere.

Victory Christian Fellowship

Victory Christian Fellowship (VCF) started in Manila in June 1984 through the ministry of founding short-term missionaries Al Manamtam, Rice Broocks, and Steve and Deborah Murrell. They visited Metro Manila when the Philippines was experiencing political turmoil and students protests due to the assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino on the tarmac of Manila International Airport. The Philippines were in a state of collapse because investors pulled back their capital during the political instability caused by the assassination. These short-term missionaries arrived at University Belt in Metro Manila and started a church for nearby college and high school students. Their original two-week evangelistic effort resulted in 150 members who met in the basement of the Tandem Theater in Recto Avenue (Murrell 2019).

VCF formed as a megachurch through the collective ministry of Western missionaries and local Filipino Christians. Murrell is fond of saying that without the faithful and active contribution of local Christians like Manny Carlos, Juray Mura, Jun Escosar, Luther Mancao, and Ferdie Cabling, the first and original members of VCF, the work of evangelism and discipleship would not have been possible (Murrell 2011, xiv, 1). Murrell compares VCF to a Wikipedia that welcomes anyone to write any information that can be quickly disseminated. He believes in “empowering volunteers and imperfect people to spread the most important message worldwide.” Murrell takes seriously the “Same Ole Boring Strokes” principle of sports coaching that patiently teaches people “every day, over and over,” until they master how to “engage, establish, equip, and empower” other people to also become disciples. Murrell points out that “if we simply focus on making disciples who are equipped and empowered to make disciples, then health, strength, and growth happen naturally” (Murrell 2011, 6, 7, 8). In 1994, ten years after its first inception, Rice Broocks, Phil Bonasso, and Steve Murrell began

to visualize turning their church into a powerhouse for campus ministry, church planting, and world missions. For this purpose, Every Nation, a worldwide church planting movement, was born. One of its founding members was VCF, whose main church is located in Global City, Taguig City. Taguig City is the seventh-largest city in the Philippines with a population of 804,915. VCF is surrounded (within one thousand meters) by premier universities and schools.

Murrell recalls that VCF's fifteen locations in Metro Manila had eighty weekend services in 2009. In addition, forty-five VCF churches were planted in the islands of the Philippines and overseas in Thailand, Bangladesh, China, and Dubai, with overall members of fifty-two-thousand. While some attendees are in their thirties, most are young professionals or college students. These young professionals are responsible for their "weekly discipleship groups in coffee shops, dorm rooms, living rooms, and board rooms all over Metro Manila" (Murrell 2011, 2, 4). In 2015, VCF reported 110,000 attending their weekly services. In 2019, VCF claimed to have 102 provincial local churches in the Philippines and 50 satellite campuses around Metro Manila. VCF also successfully planted local churches in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iran, Laos, Spain, and Vietnam (Murrell 2019).

Methodology

The methodology used for this study is a combination of multiple approaches. The research team made field visits and communications to our target projects, secured a research agreement with megachurches' leadership, and observed research protocols by communicating clearly what the research project intended to do. We examined hundreds of online sermons, TV interviews of megachurch leaders, and testimonials of CCF and VCF members. In addition, we joined the CCF and VCF social media platforms to receive and continually update each one's published videos. Finally, while we were restricted from attending the physical services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we participated in online services of both churches almost every Saturday and Sunday. The survey instrument used for this study was a leadership survey from the 2015 Survey of North American Megachurches of Hartford Institute for Religion Research, designed by Scott Thumma and Warren Bird. The research team from the Global South led by Timothy Wadkins spent one year of online Zoom meetings to create a more robust survey instrument. During the Zoom meetings, we revised, enhanced, and added important variables to the Leadership Surveys to make the instruments more appropriate in the context of the Global South. Important variables added

were engagement with the world, theological questions, and COVID-19 questions. We used the Qualtrics Online Survey and Google Form Online Survey to collect data from CCF and VCF. The survey was conducted by the Philippine Regional Team in partnership with the leadership of CCF and VCF.

The leadership survey was pretested with senior pastors of the Light of the World Church and the Guiding Light Church, two thriving and growing churches in Baguio City. Since data collection required the endorsement and recommendation of megachurch leadership, we sent the draft to CCF and VCF for review after pretesting. We emailed the leadership of both churches, charting our plan to implement the surveys. Methodological predicaments encountered during the research process involved meeting the expectations of the megachurch leaders. There was reluctance and skepticism from VCF regarding whether data collection could be successful due to the New General Community Quarantine (GCQ) imposed by the national government in Metro Manila, Philippines. The pandemic gravely affected church attendance and the timely implementation and collection of data. To formally administer the survey questionnaire to the main churches of CCF and VCF in Metro Manila, we crafted three survey versions: long, short, and abridged, and made the study available in Qualtrics and Google Forms. We also published and printed hard copies of the instruments to make them available on all fronts. Data collection procedures at CCF and VCF were strictly observed by researchers in the Philippines, from sending an official letter to the leadership of megachurches to submitting the survey instruments for review. Survey instruments were sent to the executive secretaries of CCF and VCF who copied and furnished them to the pastors and leaders.

Demographics of Pastoral Leadership of CCF and VCF

The respondents of the pastoral leadership survey are current pastors of the main campuses of CCF and VCF in Metro Manila and other satellite churches in the provinces in the Philippines. Most identified their names, though some did not want to be named for confidentiality's sake.

Ages (Year of birth)	CCF (N=21)	VCF (N=20)
30-40 (1981-1990)	0 (0%)	4 (20%)
40-50 (1971-1980)	4 (19.04%)	12 (60%)
50-60 (1961-1970)	4 (19.04%)	4 (20%)
60-70 (1948-1960)	13 (61.90%)	0 (0%)

Regarding age, the survey shows that CCF pastors are older than VCF pastors. No CCF pastors were born in the 1980s and 1990s, indicating that no CCF millennials participated in the survey. Four (19.04%) CCF pastors are in their forties and fifties, while another four (19.04%) are in their fifties and sixties. Thirteen (61.90%) are in their sixties and seventies. At VCF, four (20%) are in their thirties and forties, twelve (60%) are in their forties and fifties, and four (20%) are in their fifties and sixties.

Gender

Male	21 (100%)	20 (100%)
Female	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Marital Status

Married	20 (95.24)	20 (100%)
Widow/Widower	1 (4.76%)	0 (0%)

Regarding gender, male preachers dominate both megachurches. All CCF and VCF pastors who were interviewed are male. While both churches empower women to assume an essential role in their church ministries, women are rarely seen in the ministry of preaching. All male pastors are married, with one from CCF recently becoming a widower.

Race and Ethnicity

Filipinos	13 (71.42%)	15 (75%)
Other Asian/Chinese	7 (33.3)	5 (25%)
Caucasian/White	1 (4.76)	0 (0%)

Birthplace

Philippines	20 (95.32%)	20 (100%)
USA	1 (4.76%)	0 (0%)

Passports/Citizenship Status

Philippines	16 (76.19%)	20 (100%)
USA	4 (19.04%)	0 (0%)
Taiwan	1 (4.76%)	0 (0%)

Regarding the race and ethnic identity of CCF leadership, thirteen (71.42%) respondents are Filipinos, seven (33.3%) are Asians of Chinese descent, and one (4.76%) is an American. Regarding the birthplace country, twenty pastors (95.32%) were born in the Philippines and one (4.76%) was born in the United States. While sixteen (76.19%) respondents hold Filipino passports, four (19.04%) are US citizens, and one (4.76%) has a Taiwanese passport. At VCF, fifteen (75%) respondents are purely Filipinos, while five (25%) are Filipino-Chinese. All are born in the Philippines and have Filipino passports.

Proficiency of Languages

One Language (English)	2 (9.52%)	1 (5%)
Bi-Lingual	13 (61.90%)	17 (85%)
Tri-lingual	4 (19.04%)	1 (5%)
Quad-lingual or more	2 (9.52%)	1 (5%)

Regarding language proficiency, CCF and VCF leaders are multi-lingual, speaking two, three, or four languages. Only two (9.52%) CCF pastors speak only English; thirteen (61.9%) are bi-lingual with fluent English and Tagalog. Four (19.04%) are tri-lingual, speaking three languages. Another two (9.52%) pastors are quadrilateral and speak four or five languages, including English, Tagalog, Cebuano, Chinese, Spanish, or Bahasa. Regarding VCF, one (5%) can only speak English; seventeen (85%) are bi-lingual, fluent in English and Tagalog. One (5%) speaks English, Tagalog, and Ilocano dialects. One (5%) speaks four or five languages, such as Tagalog, Chinese, English, Ilocano, or Cebuano.

Educational Attainment

Some College or Technical Schools	2 (9.52%)	1 (5%)
College with Bachelor's Degree	9 (42.86%)	9 (45%)
In-House Training for Ministry	1 (4.76%)	3 (15%)
Master's Degree	6 (28.57%)	4 (20%)
Doctoral Degree	2 (9.52%)	1 (5%)
Others	1 (4.76%)	2 (10%)

Regarding educational attainment, pastors of CCF and VCF are highly educated, trained at national and overseas colleges and universities. At CCF, two (9.52%) leaders have technical and associate college degrees; nine (42.86%) have a College Bachelor's Degree; six (28.57%) have a Master's Degree; and two (9.52%) have a doctoral degree. One (4.76%) has In-House Training for the Ministry and one

(4.76%) has specialized training from a different school. It is striking to observe that most respondents with a Master's degree earned their degree from universities in the USA or overseas. Others obtained their Master's Degrees at theological seminaries in Manila, like the Asian Theological Seminary and International Graduate School of Leadership. Five (25%) of the respondents completed their doctoral studies at Dallas Theological Seminary and Ateneo de Manila University. One respondent is a medical doctor.

At VCF, one (5%) respondent attended a college and technical school; nine (45%) completed bachelor's degrees; three (15%) completed an in-house training center in ministry; four (20%) have Master's Degrees, and one (5%) completed his DMin. Two (10%) received other training not indicated in the survey. Two (10%) pastors completed their graduate and post-graduate degrees in a USA seminary or college. The rest studied at the Evangelical seminaries in the Philippines and major universities in Manila. Pastors primarily sought graduate and post-graduate education in the USA.

Profession before Entering the Ministry²

Senior Officers/Managers	13 (61.9%)	4 (20%)
Professionals	6 (28.57%)	12 (60%)
Technicians and Associate Professionals	2 (9.52%)	4 (20%)

Megachurch pastors of CCF and VCF belonged to the highest professions in the corporate world before entering the ministry. When asked whether they had an occupation before entering the ministry, twenty (95%) had jobs and careers before assuming a leadership role at CCF. Only one (5%) indicated that pastoral ministry is his sole occupation. When asked about the classifications of their jobs and professions, thirteen (61.9%) had been senior officers, CEOs, and managers in corporations; six (28.57%) worked as professionals; and two (9.52%) had been technicians and associate professionals. At VCF, four (20%) were previously senior officers and managers, twelve (60%) were professionals, and four (20%) were technicians and associate

²International Labor Organization, "The International Standard of Classifications of Occupations (ISCO)" available at: International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)—ILOSTAT. The classification of occupations, skills, and jobs of megachurch pastors is based on the International Labor Organization. Based on this classification, megachurch pastors in the Philippines belonged to the highest professions and occupations before entering the pastoral ministry.

professionals. In addition, respondents listed occupations such as engineers, business people, entrepreneurs, managers, and marketing professionals, before becoming pastors.

Years of Service in the Ministry

5 years	5 (23.8%)	2 (10%)
10 years	6 (28.57%)	5 (25%)
20 years	9 (42.85%)	4 (20%)
30 years	1 (4.76%)	7 (35%)
40 years	0 (0%)	2 (10%)

Most megachurch pastors have been serving in the ministry for decades, and many of their wives share the work of the ministry. When it comes to longevity, ministry, and family participation at CCF, five (23.8%) started serving as pastors five years ago; six (28.57%) served as pastors ten years ago; and nine (42.85%) served as pastors twenty years ago. Only one (4.76%) was serving as a pastor thirty years ago. Asked whether they served on a church staff before becoming pastors, fourteen (66.67%) said no; four (19.05%) said yes; and three (14.29 %) said the question was not applicable. Regarding spousal partnership in ministry, eleven (55%) said their wives shared in leadership, while ten (45%) said their wives are not involved.

At VCF, two (10%) pastors have served for five years; five (25%) for ten years; four (20%) for twenty years; seven (35%) for 30 years; and two (10%) between thirty to forty years. Asked whether they previously served on a church staff before becoming a VCF pastor, sixteen (80%) were on a staff, while four (20%) did not. Regarding spousal participation in leadership, fifteen (75%) said their wives do not share in pastoral leadership responsibilities. Five (25%) said their wives are involved in leadership.

Data Analyses and Findings

The Bible and Its Interpretation

Regarding their perspectives about the Bible, twenty-one (100%) of CCF pastors said that God inspires the Bible, that it is the authority for faith and practice, and that it is a system of truth that is entirely complete, infallible, and free from error. Regarding how the Bible is interpreted among CCF pastors, fourteen of them (66.67%) said that although it is an inspired and infallible document, it must be studied and applied like

an architect studying the blueprint of a building while seven (33.33%) said that while the Bible has a truthful literal sense, the Holy Spirit can add meaning to the Bible. No CCF leaders believe that quoting specific texts or having a Bible in one's possession can be a force of healing, deliverance, and protection from demonic assault.

Most Megachurch Leaders Place a High Value on the Holy Scripture and Affirm that It Has To Be Interpreted Creatively by the Leading of the Holy Spirit

Table 1: CCF Perspective on the Bible Interpretations
 Source 1: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analysis, 3rdQ, 2022

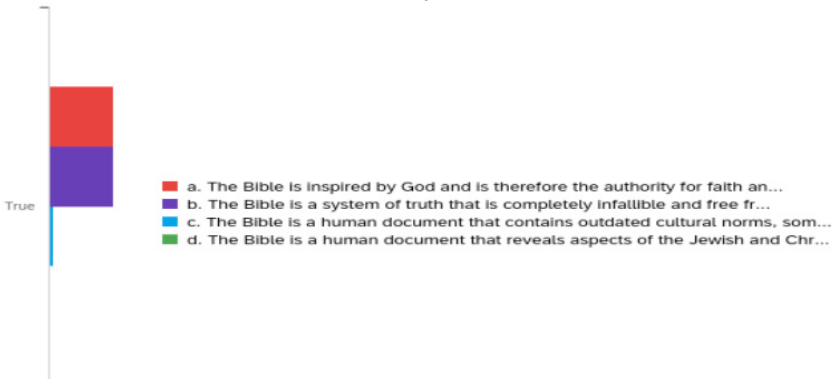
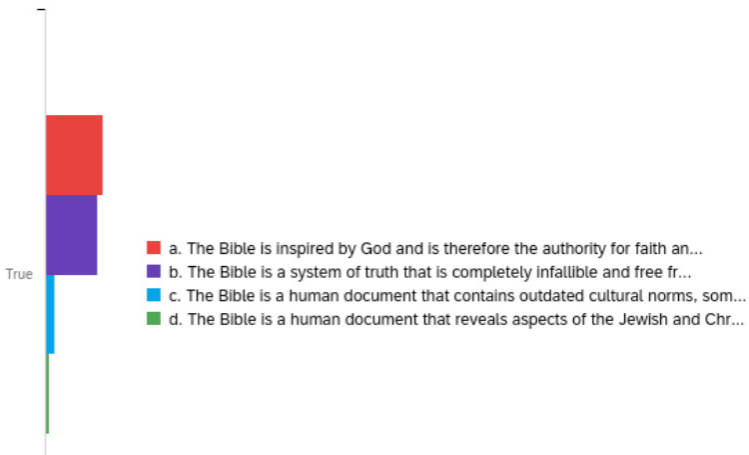


Table 2: VCF Perspective on Bible Interpretations
 Source 2: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analysis, 3rdQ, 2022



Regarding VCF pastors, nine (47.62%) agreed that God inspires the Bible and that it is the authority of faith and practice. Eight (42.86%) said the Bible is an entirely infallible and error-free system of truth. However, two (7.14%) said the Bible is a human document containing outdated cultural norms, some textual contradictions, and factual errors. One (2.38%) respondent also believes that the Bible is a human document that reveals an aspect of the Jewish and Christian traditions and points to the radical message of Christ. However, it is neither inspired, free from error, nor absolute authority for faith and practice. Regarding how VCF interprets the Bible, twelve (63.33%) of the respondents said that the Bible is an inspired and infallible document, and it is to be studied and applied like an architect would study and apply a blueprint when constructing a building. The other seven (33.33%) said that while the Bible has a truthful literal sense, the Holy Spirit can add meaning to the Bible. Only one (3.33%) said that quoting certain texts or having the Bible in one's possession can be a force of healing, deliverance, and protection from demonic assault.

Salvation and Deliverance

Regarding the theology of CCF about salvation and deliverance, the theological themes that received the most complete answers in the field are as follows: all CCF pastors believe that heaven and hell are real, and at the end of life every human being is destined for one or the other. All agree that salvation is an immediate event when people turn their lives over to Christ, accept him as their Savior, and are "born again." While eighteen (90%) of CCF leaders said that humans have free will to reject and receive the gift of salvation, nineteen (92.31%) think that humans are predestined to salvation and damnation. Fifteen (75%) are still studying whether salvation can be lost. When it comes to the role of faith in salvation, all agree that salvation requires personal faith. Salvation is a process and a growing realization that a person wants to be a disciple of Jesus. For CCF pastors, faith is a kind of hope or trust in God's overall faithfulness; faith is a certainty that God will provide whatever an individual asks for (as long as they have faith). Asked whether faith can be made stronger through positive confession or confessing the result of something asked for as though it has already been given, only thirteen (63.64%) agreed with the statement, and eight (36.36%) said they are unsure of it. Regarding the issue of deliverance, nineteen (93.75%) agreed that Christ can forgive sin, and he can be counted on to deliver an individual from demonic possession, psychological burdens,

physical infirmity, or economic poverty. Nineteen (93.33%) agreed that deliverance requires faith, while two (6.67%) are uncertain.

Megachurch Leaders Adhere to the Fundamental Belief and Doctrine of Evangelicals Regarding Salvation and Deliverance

Table 3: CCF Perspective About Salvation and Deliverance
 Source 3: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analysis, 3rdQ, 2022

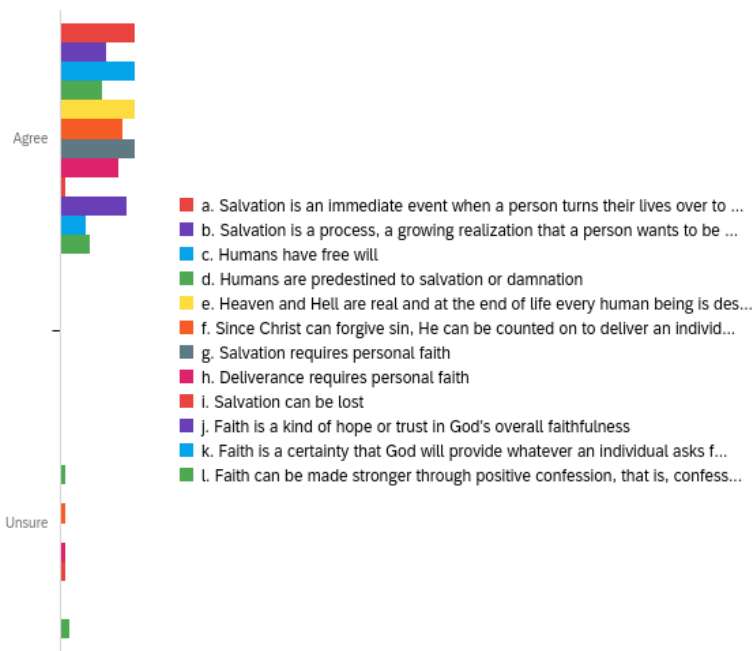
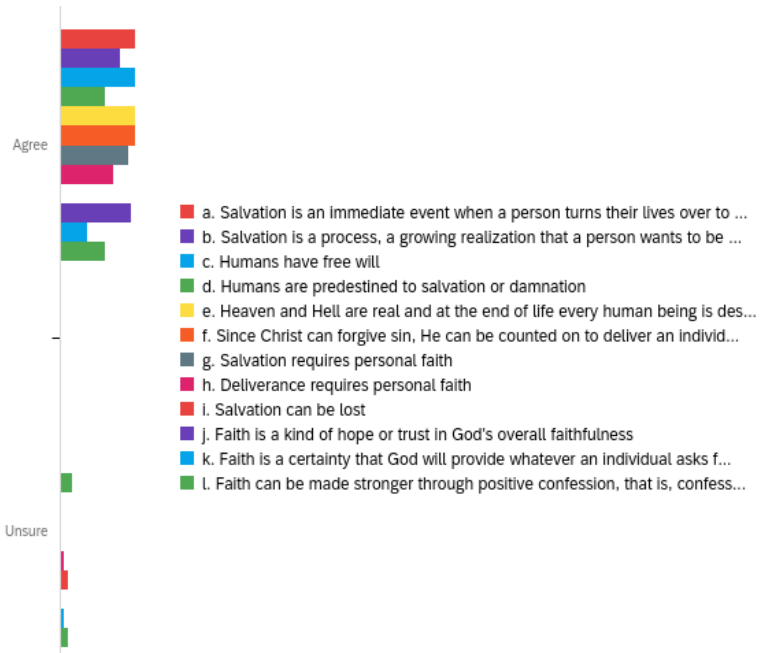


Table 4: VCF Perspective About Salvation and Deliverance
 Source 4: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses, 3rdQ, 2022



Regarding the VCF perspective of salvation and deliverance, all pastors agreed that salvation is an immediate event when a person turns their lives over to Christ, accepts him as their Savior, and is “born again.” All believe that salvation is a process, a growing realization that a person wants to be a disciple of Jesus, and all agreed that humans have free will. As to whether humans are predestined to salvation and damnation, sixteen (80%) agreed, and four (20%) are unsure about the statement. Asked about their perspective of heaven and hell, twenty (100%) agreed that heaven and hell are real; at the end of life, every human being is destined for one or the other. With regards to the power of Christ to forgive sins, twenty (100%) agreed that Christ can be counted on to deliver an individual from demonic possession, psychological burdens, physical infirmity, or even economic poverty. Regarding the role of faith, twenty (100%) of pastors agreed that salvation requires personal faith. Eighteen (93.33%) concurred that deliverance requires faith. All are unsure whether salvation can be lost. Nineteen pastors agreed that faith is hope and trust in God’s faithfulness. About the certainty of faith, that God will provide whatever an individual asks for as long as they

have faith, seventeen (87.50%) agreed with the statement; the same percentage of pastors also agreed that faith can be made stronger through positive confession; that is, confessing the result of something asked for as though it has already been given strengthens faith.

Living as a Disciple of Christ

The church is called to live out the Christian life as disciples of Jesus Christ. Christian churches believe that the church, the body of Christ on earth, is the practical expression of Jesus in our broken world. They are called to become a mouthpiece of God and a moral conscience of society. This study asked how megachurches define the meaning of Christian discipleship and to rank how Christians should live as disciples of Christ. Eighteen (85.7%) pastors said living as a disciple of Christ means loving others as God loves them and becoming more morally like Christ. Second, for seventeen (80.95%) pastors, it is essential to have a disciplined life, be inclusive and welcome others into the Christian fold, and engage the world to spread the good news. Ranked third in importance by CCF pastors is solidarity with the poor and marginalized people of the world. Ranked fourth is having a counter-cultural impact on the negative influences of modern culture. Fifth, it is important to use their talents to succeed in the world. Ranked last is influencing others by living a prosperous life, and being prophetically and critically engaged with the world.

Table 5: CCF Leaders' Perspective on Living as Disciples of Christ
Source 5: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses,
3rdQ, 2022

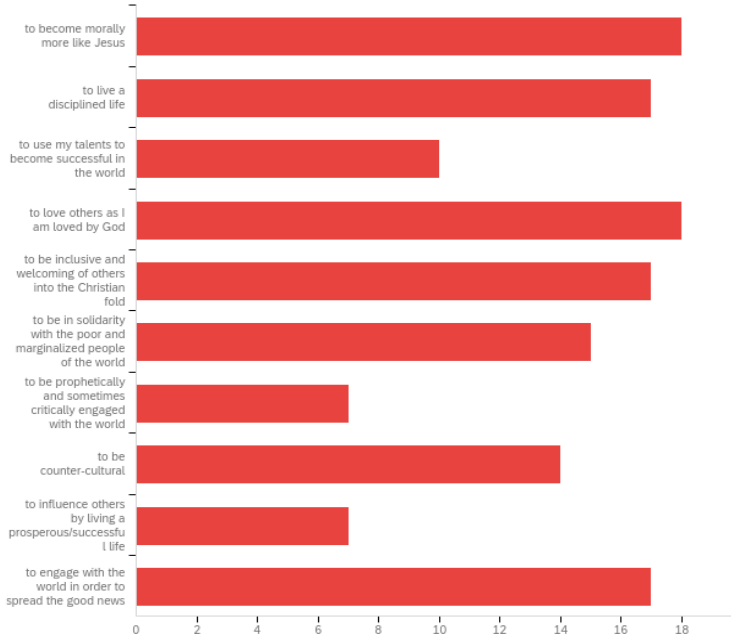
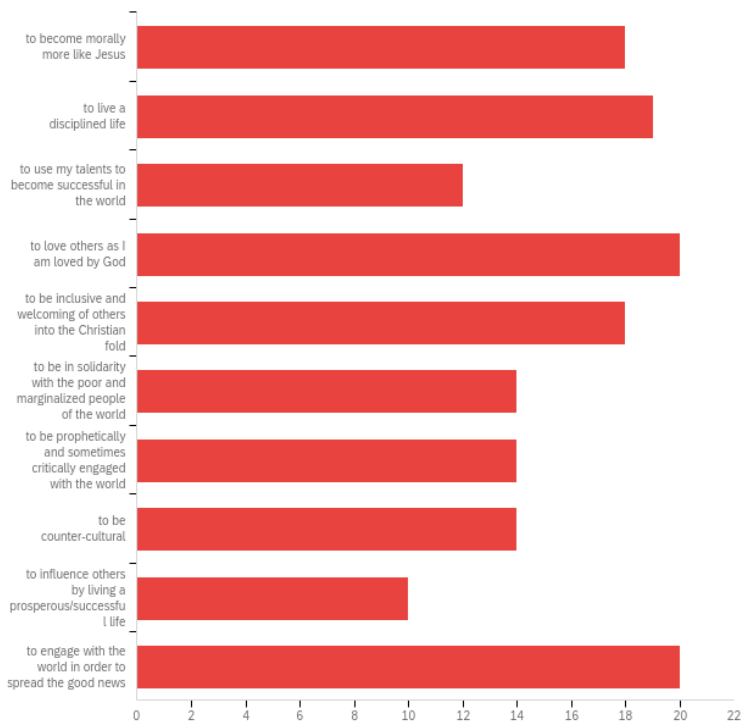


Table 6: VCF Leaders' Perspective on Living As Disciples of Christ
 Source 6: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses, 3rdQ, 2022



Among VCF pastors, twenty (100%) said that living as a disciple of Christ today means loving others as God loves them and engaging with the Word to spread the good news of Jesus. Nineteen (95%) said that becoming a disciple of Jesus means living a disciplined life. Eighteen (90%) say that living as disciples of Christ means becoming morally like Christ, being inclusive, and welcoming others into the Christian fold. Fourteen (70%) said that becoming a disciple means being in solidarity with the poor and marginalized in the world, being prophetically and critically engaged in the world, and being a counter culture in society. Twelve (60%) think that to live as a disciple of Christ is to use their talents and become successful in the world. Finally, ten (50%) said Christian discipleship means influencing others by living a prosperous life.

Christian Life and God's Plan

Regarding God's plan for the Christian life, survey results show that all CCF leadership believes God has a personal plan for every Christian. That plan is realized by living a life of faith and constantly praying for the knowledge of God's will. They agreed that there is a cosmic battle between evil forces and good in which Christians can and should participate through spiritual warfare. Finally, all leaders agree that tithing of 10 percent is mandated in the Bible and is an essential practice of the Christian life.

Megachurches Believe that Even if There Is a Cosmic Battle Between Forces of God and Evil in the World, God Has a Plan for Each Individual, and It Can Be Realized by Living by Faith. Megachurch Pastors Believe That Tithing Is Biblical and Should Be Practiced by All Christians

Table 7: CCF Perspective on Christian Life

Source 8: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analysis, 3rdQ, 2022

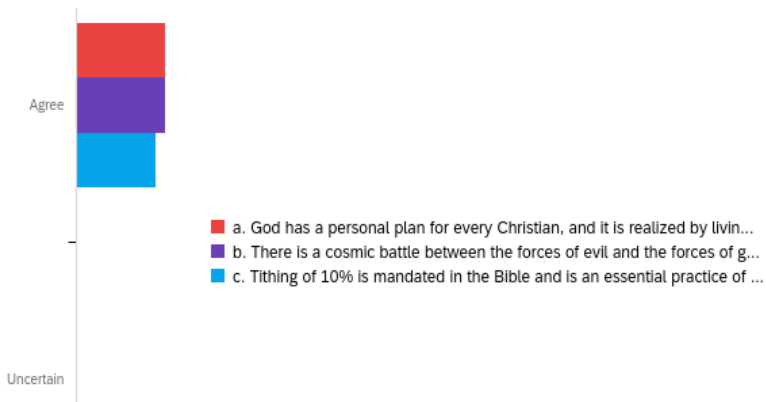
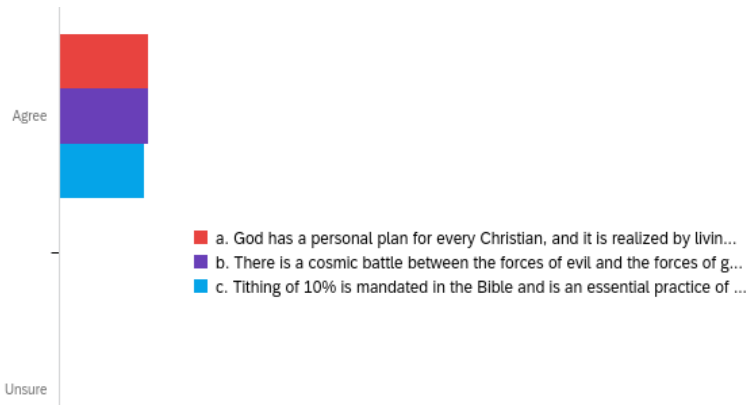


Table 8: VCF Perspective on Christian Life
 Source 10: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analysis,
 3rdQ, 2022



When asked about the Christian life, all VCF pastors said that God has a personal plan for every Christian, and it is realized by living a life of faith and constantly praying for the knowledge of God’s will. Equally, all said that there is a cosmic battle between the forces of evil and the forces of good in which Christians can and should participate through spiritual warfare. Finally, when it comes to giving tithes, all affirm that tithing of 10 percent is mandated in the Bible and is an essential practice of the Christian life.

Miracles and the Role of the Holy Spirit

The role of the Holy Spirit and belief in miracles are considered essential factors for the life of the megachurch, and it is also the power and the driving force that fuels its growth. There are apparent patterns and observations regarding the perspective of CCF leaders about miracles, the Holy Spirit, and charism. Thirteen (61.90%) respondents believe that Christians can be filled with the Holy Spirit and receive spiritual gifts and charisms, but none believe that speaking in tongues is the necessary evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Thirteen (61.90%) respondents think Christians ought to expect miracles like in the Bible stories. No respondents believe that the age of miracles ended with the apostles’ death. Five (23.80%) believe Christians ought to receive physical healing from the Holy Spirit, and twelve said healing is received through faith. Six (28.57%) believe that the Holy Spirit heals and answers prayer through anointed people with special gifts regarding

how healing can occur. Three (14.28%) agreed that laying on hands can impart spiritual gifts.

Nevertheless, none consider that the Spirit heals and answers prayer through sanctified objects like stones, water, oil, honey, blessed clothes, etc. Regarding health and prosperity, fifteen (71.43%) believe that God wants Christians to be prosperous, but only three (14.28) believe that God wants Christians to be wealthy. Seventeen (80.95%) said the prosperity gospel is idolatry, yet sixteen (76.19%) noted that God could heal our financial problems and make us prosperous. Six (28.57%) also believe prosperity and financial success can be received through faith.

Megachurch Leaders Advocate the Continuity of the Work of the Holy Spirit and Charisms Today

Table 9: CCF Perspective on Miracles, the Holy Spirit, and Charisms
Source 7: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analysis, 3rdQ, 2022



Table 10: VCF Perspective of Miracles, the Holy Spirit, and Charisms
 Source 8: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses,
 3rdQ, 2022



Regarding the Holy Spirit, twenty (100%) of VCF pastors say that Christians can be filled with or baptized in the Holy Spirit and receive any number of charismatic gifts such as speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophetic dreams, dancing or singing in the Spirit, healing, etc. Nineteen (95%) say that laying on hands imparts spiritual gifts. Five (25%) said that what some see as charismatic gifts is often Satan tempting believers away from salvation. Only three (15%) leaders said speaking in tongues is the necessary evidence of Spirit-baptism.

Regarding their view on healing, twenty (100%) said that healing is received through faith, and seventeen (85%) said Christians should expect physical healing from the Holy Spirit. Although ten (50%) respondents agree that the Spirit heals and answers prayers through anointed people with special gifts, only three (15%) said that the Spirit heals and answers prayer through sanctified objects like stones, water, oil, honey, blessed clothes, etc.

Regarding miracles, all twenty (100%) VCF respondents said that Christians should expect miracles like those in the Bible stories. Eighteen (90%) said that exorcism and deliverance ministries are biblical. However, none said that the age of miracles ended with the apostles' death. In other words, the work and the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit continue today. When it comes to prosperity, nineteen (95%) believe that God wants Christians to be prosperous, and eighteen (90%) said that God can heal our complex financial problems and make

us successful and prosperous in the world. Sixteen (80%) also said that economic prosperity is received through faith, and eight (40%) leaders said that God wants Christians to be wealthy. However, thirteen (65%) said that prosperity is a form of idolatry.

Weapons of Spiritual Warfare

Megachurches Highly Support Spiritual Disciplines Such as Prayer, Fasting, Exorcism, and the Practice of Charism as Important Weapons of Spiritual Warfare

Table 11: CCF Perspective on Weapons of Spiritual Warfare
Source 14: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses, 3rdQ, 2022

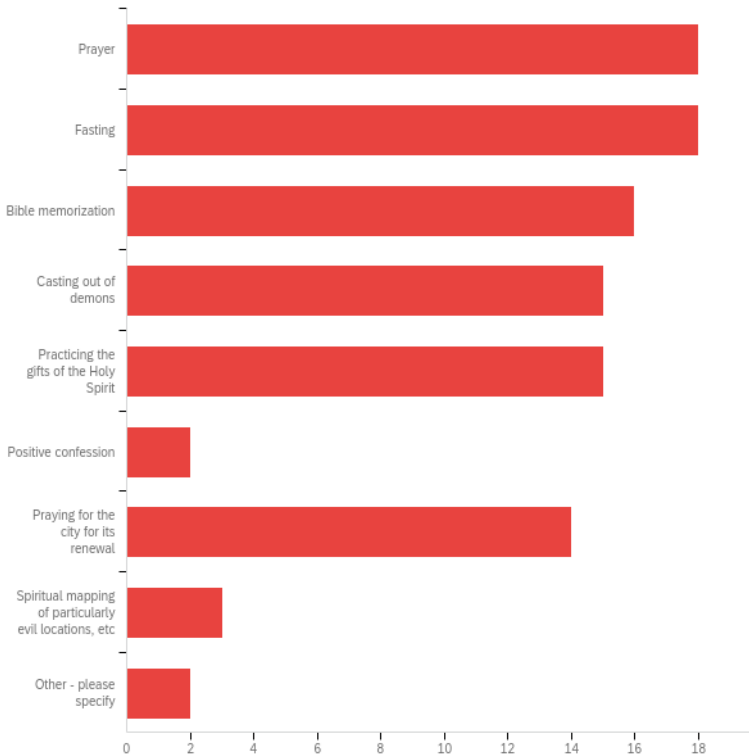
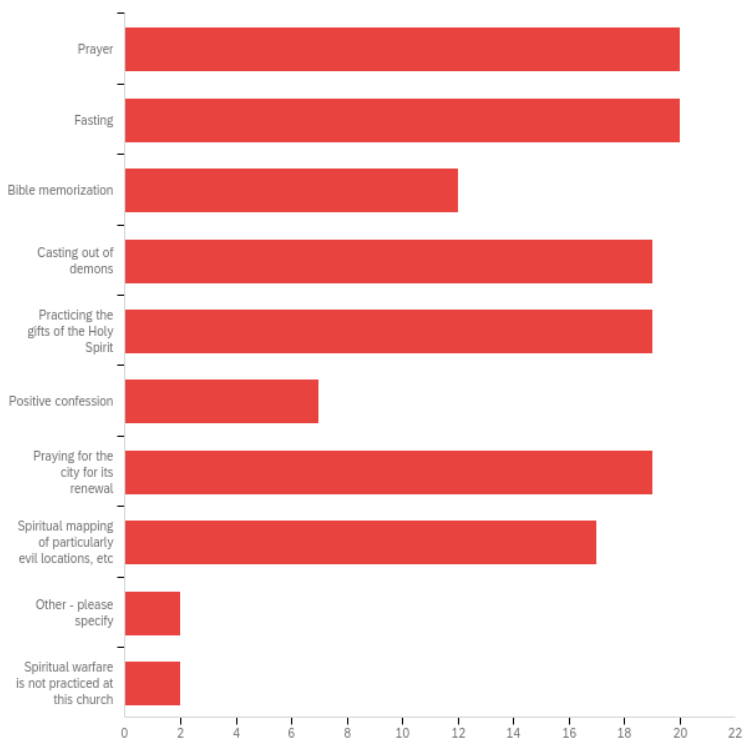


Table 12: VCF Perspective on Spiritual Warfare
 Source 16: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses, 3rdQ, 2022



Spiritual warfare is part of Christian spirituality and discipleship. The churches believe they are waging war against the spiritual forces in the heavenly realm, so they develop spiritual weaponry that aid them in waging war against evil. When asked which aspect of spiritual warfare is practiced in the church, twenty (100%) of the pastors said that the power of fasting as well as prayer received the most important weapons. Nineteen (90.47%) said that practicing the gifts of the Holy Spirit and prayer for the renewal of a city are essential aspects of spiritual warfare as practiced in the church. Nineteen (90.47%) said Bible memorization is important. Eighteen (85.71%) thinks that Christian exorcism and exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit are essential. Seventeen (80.95%) think that praying for the city’s renewal has an important impact in the city. Other aspects like spiritual mapping of particularly evil locations (14.28%), positive confession (9.52%), and other practices (9.52%)

are the least of the weapons as observed by the CCF leadership. Some leaders also mention praying for the nation and a deliverance ministry as prescribed by Neil Anderson.

When asked about aspects of spiritual warfare practices of VCF, twenty (100%) of respondents placed prayer as the prime element of spiritual warfare along with fasting. These two critical elements of spirituality are sometimes inseparably practiced. Nineteen (90.47%) said that exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit, casting out evil spirits, and praying for the renewal of the city were the second most important form of spiritual warfare at VCF. Seventeen (85%) also believe that there are spiritual strongholds to be demolished in a city, so spiritual mapping of particular locations is essential among VCF pastors. Twelve (60%) think that Bible memorization is essential and seven (35%) said positive confession are necessary but the least valued among the weapons of spiritual warfare. Only two individuals (10%) said spiritual warfare is not practiced in the church. VCF pastors also added that praise and worship and gospel proclamation are other practices of spiritual warfare at their church.

Satan, Evil, and Suffering

There are three responses to the perspective of CCF leadership about Satan, his demons, and the suffering in this world. First, eighteen (90%) agreed that the devil influences human life and the world. The devil and his demons can possess people, yet people can be delivered from the power of darkness and his demons. Sixteen (80%) agreed that people can be harmed or cursed by witches or sorcerers. Thirteen (65%) said that people can be possessed by ancestors, evil spirits, or non-Christian divinities.

Regarding widespread suffering, only six (28.57%) agreed that widespread suffering is associated with God's punishment in the world. However, fourteen (66.66%) agreed that sometimes it is a sign of God's punishment for sin. Eight (38.09%) said that HIV/AIDS is a sign of God's punishment for evildoers. Sixteen (76.19%) said that evil can reside in social structures and political systems, and seventeen (80.95%) agreed that the presence of evil can be seen in the struggle against principalities and powers. Finally, pastors are doubtful and ambivalent whether sickness such as HIV/AIDs or COVID-19 are God's punishment for evil in the world.

Megachurches Agree that Satan and his Demons Are Real and Have the Power To Influence, Harm, and Cause Evil in Persons and Social Structures. However, Megachurches Are Ambivalent about Whether Human Suffering, such as AIDS/HIV and COVID-19 Are God’s Punishment for Sin

Table 13: CCF Perspective about Satan, Evil, and Suffering
 Source 9: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses, 3rdQ, 2022

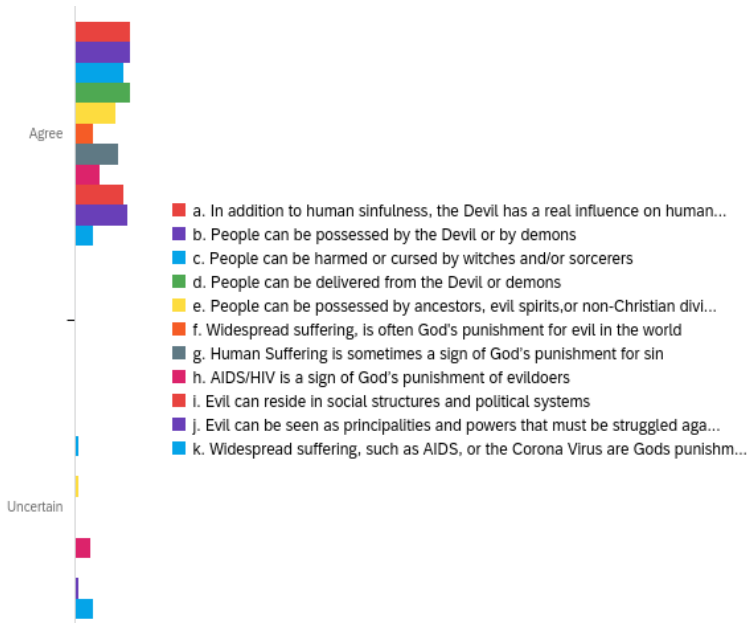


Table 14: VCF Perspective on Satan, Evil, and Suffering
Source 10: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses,
3rdQ, 2022

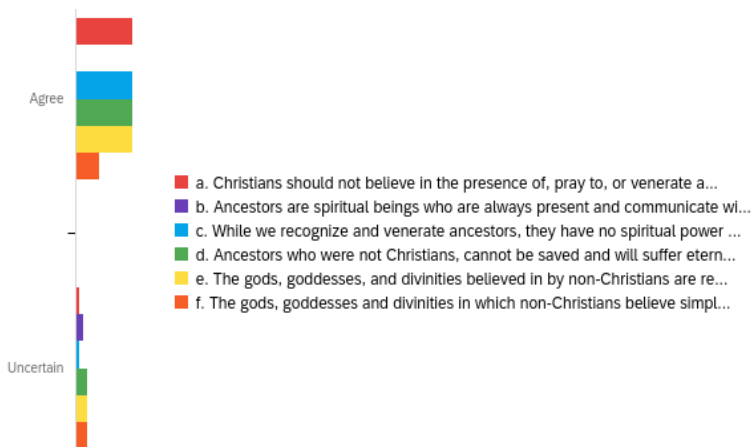


When it comes to the VCF perspective of evil in our world today, eighteen (90%) said that witches and sorcerers can harm or curse people. The same is true of demons and becoming possessed by ancestors. Sixteen (80%) said that people can be possessed by ancestors, evil spirits, or non-Christian divinities, nine (45%) believed widespread suffering is often God's punishment. Seventeen (85%) agreed that human suffering is sometimes a sign of God's punishment for sin. Eight (40%) said that AIDS/HIV is a sign of God's punishment for evildoers. Only six (30%) said that widespread suffering such as COVID-19 is God's punishment globally.

Ancestral Worship and Deities

Filipinos are deeply religious and engaged spiritually because of their close associations with the spirit world. They believe that the spirit and natural world commune with each other. Therefore, how megachurch pastors perceive ancestors and deities is a point of interest. Regarding belief in ancestors and deities, twenty-one (100%) agreed that Christians

Table 16: VCF Perspective about Ancestors and Deities
Source 12: Templeton Megachurch Project Survey Analyses, 3rdQ, 2022



Regarding VCF pastors, nineteen (93.75%) said Christians should not believe in the presence of, pray to, or venerate ancestors. All leaders rejected the belief that ancestors are spiritual beings who are always present and communicate with us. Nineteen (93.75%) said that while people recognize and venerate ancestors, they have no spiritual power in our lives. Furthermore, nineteen (93.75%) said that ancestors who are not Christians cannot be saved and will suffer eternal damnation in hell, sixteen (83.33%) also believe that gods, ancestors, and divinities believed in by non-Christians are real but demonic forces. However, thirteen (66.67%) of the leaders said that the gods, goddesses, and divinities in which non-Christians believe do not exist.

Gender and Sexuality

Differing attitudes about women, sexual orientation, and birth control exist within churches across the globe. Megachurches in the Global South have not dealt with these issues. Some consider that women should be treated equally to men in their role in society. However, others argue that they must be submissive and observe ancient cultural decorum inside the church. When it comes to CCF leaders regarding issues of gender and sexuality, the survey shows that while all of the leaders reject and disagree with the idea that women must wear veils in the church and that women and men should sit separately in church, twelve (65%) agreed that women are to be submissive to men. Regarding women's

leadership, fourteen (66.67%) do feel that women should remain silent in the church. Nineteen (94.44%) of them disagreed that women cannot be teachers in the church, fifteen (72.22%) of them agreed that women cannot be ordained as pastors or elders.

When it comes to sexual orientation, fifteen (72.22%) agreed that homosexuality is a sin and practicing homosexuals should not be allowed to become church members or church leaders. Regarding abortion, seventeen (83.33%) agreed that abortion is always sinful and that Christians should work to preserve human life. Regarding contraception, fifteen (72.22%) disagreed that contraception or artificial birth control is sinful so Christians should accept as many children as God sends.

Megachurches Support the Equality of Genders but Mostly Reject Homosexual Orientations and Abortion. The Issue of Contraception and Birth Control Is Still Debatable Within Megachurches

Table 17: CCF Leaders' Perspective on Gender and Sexuality
Source 13: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses, 3rdQ, 2022

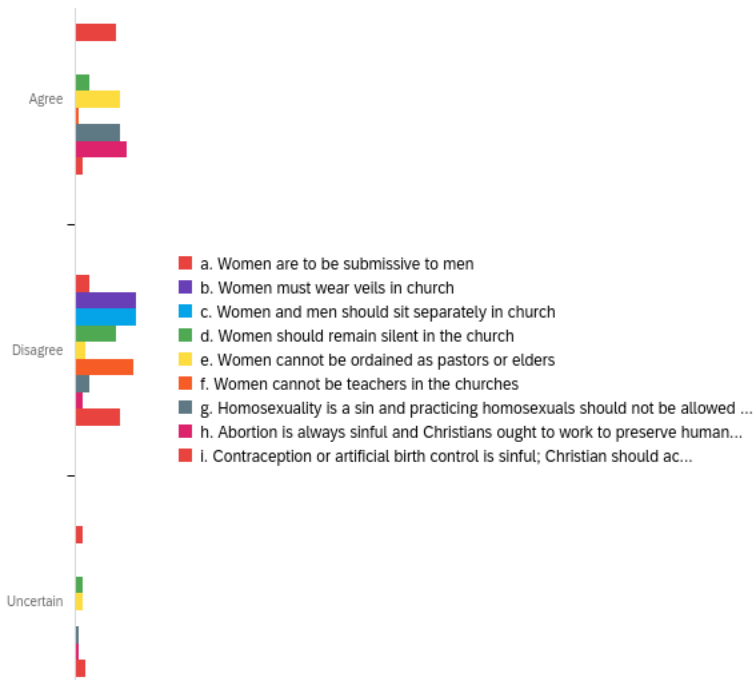
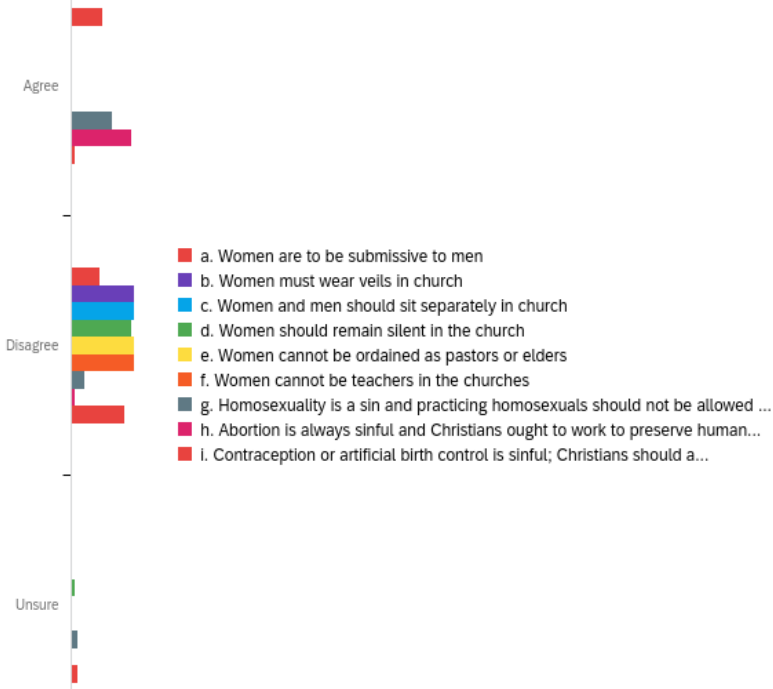


Table 18: VCF Leaders' Perspective on Gender and Sexuality
Source 14: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses,
3rdQ, 2022



Regarding gender and sexuality, twenty (100%) rejected the idea that women must wear veils in the church and that women and men should sit separately. However, regarding women's submission, VCF pastors differ in their opinion. Ten (53.63%) said women are to be submissive to men, while eight (47.37%) disagreed with the idea. Meanwhile, nineteen (95%) of the pastors disagreed that women should remain silent in the church. All of them disagreed that women cannot be ordained as pastors or elders. All rejected the idea that women cannot be teachers in the church.

When it comes to homosexual orientation, thirteen (68.42%) said that homosexuality is a sin and practicing homosexuals should not be allowed to become church members or leaders of the church. Regarding abortion, nineteen (95%) of pastors said it is sinful, and Christians should work to preserve human life. Seventeen (85%) said contraception and artificial birth control is sinful, and Christians should accept as many children as God sends.

Church Financial Health Condition Five Years Ago and Today

When it comes to describing the CCF church’s financial condition five years ago, two (12.5%) said their churches are in serious difficulty, one (6.3%) said the church is in some difficulty, one (6.3%) said finances are tight. However, four (25.0%) claimed that their financial state is good, and ten (50%) said that it is excellent. Describing the financial situation today, ten (45.5%) said the church’s financial condition is good, while eleven (54.5 %) said it is excellent.

Megachurch Leaders Claim They Had an Excellent or Good Financial Condition Five Years Ago and Even in Today’s Situation

Table 19: Description of CCF Financial Situation Five Years Ago and Today’s Situation

Source 15: Templeton Megachurch Project of Leadership Survey Analysis, 3rd Quarter, 2022

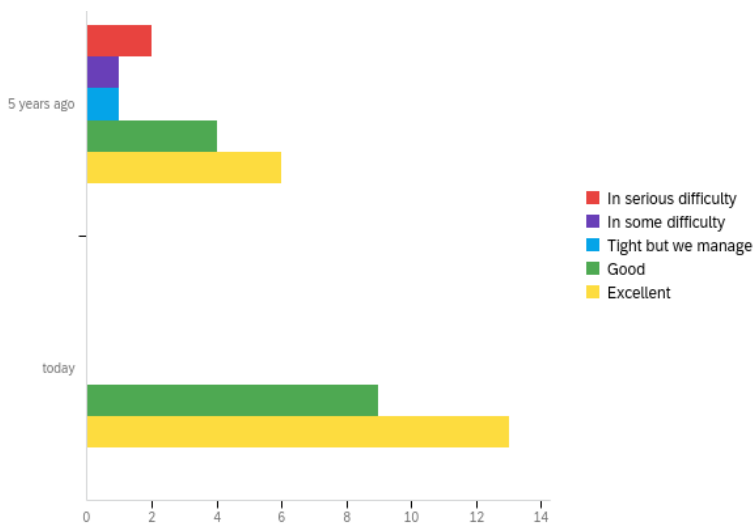
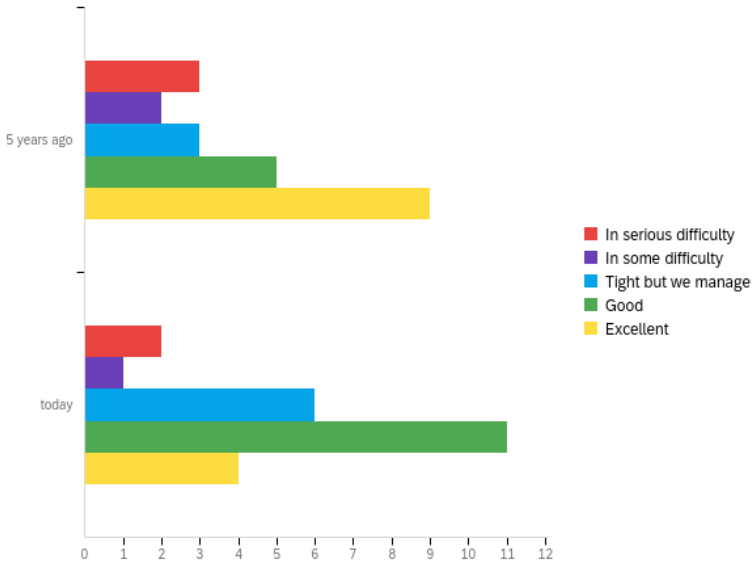


Table 20: Description of VCF Financial Conditions Five Years Ago and Today’s Situation

Source 16: Templeton Megachurch Project of Leadership Survey Analysis, 3rd Quarter, 2022



About VCF’s financial situation five years ago, three (13.64%) said they were in serious difficulty, two (9.09%) said in some difficulty, three (13.64%) said that finances were tight, but they managed, five (22.73) said the financial situation was good, and nine (40.91%) said it was excellent. In today’s financial situation, two (8.33%) said that they are in serious difficulty, one (4.17%) said the church is in some difficulty, and six (25%) said have tight finances. However, nine (45.83%) said their finances are good, and four (16.67%) said they are excellent. Seven said, they do not know.

Christian Engagement in the World

Christian engagement in the world is an integral part of the Christian mission, rooted in the ministry of Christ and the early church. Christian churches are called to bring their witness to the public sphere, whether political, economic, or social issues challenge the church. CCF leaders are divided whether the ills of the world will only be healed when everyone comes to know Christ. Twenty-one (100%) interviewed agreed

that since Christ will return to judge the sin of the world, it is imperative of their calling as a church to do everything they can to win people for Jesus Christ. In addition, nineteen (94.44%) agreed that evangelism is the most essential social engagement, and eighteen (88.89%) agreed that Christians ought to be engaged in making the world a better place to live. Consequently, alongside evangelism, economic, political, ecological, and social engagement should be major priorities for the church.

Megachurches Admit They Cannot Heal the Ills of This World but Believe that Winning People through Evangelism and Social Engagement Before Christ Returns is imperative for Christians

Table 21: CCF Perspective on Christian Engagement in the World
 Source 17: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses, 3rdQ, 2022

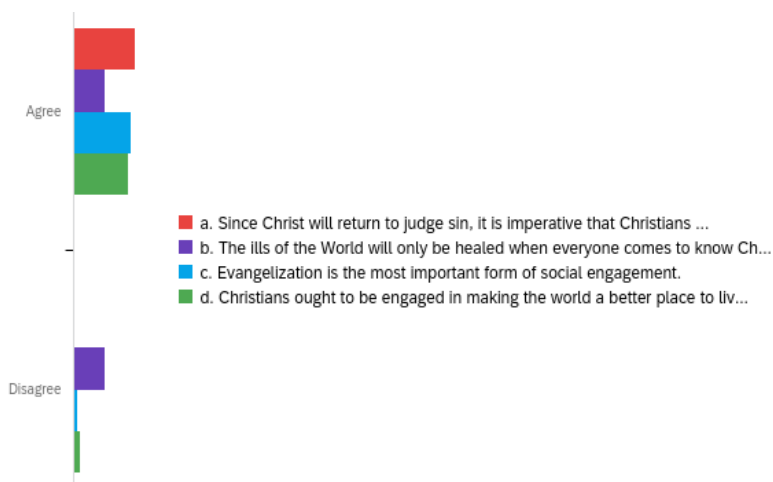
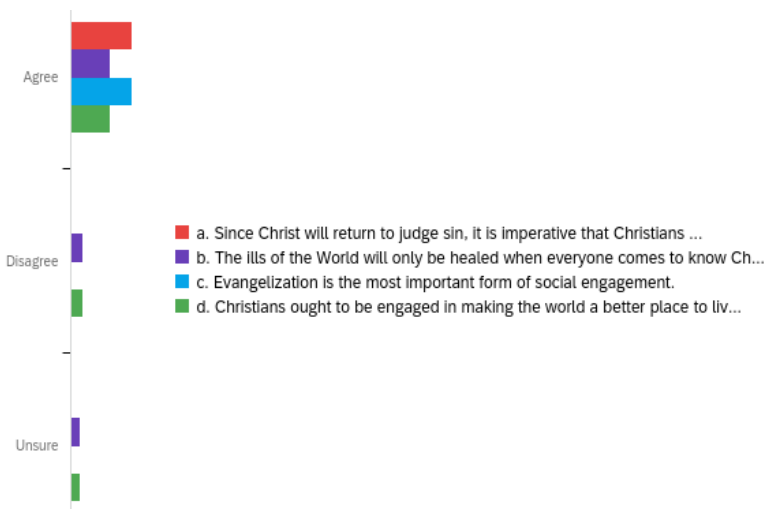


Table 22: VCF Perspective on Christian Engagement in the World
Source 18: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses,
3rdQ, 2022



Regarding Christian engagement in the world, all twenty (100%) said that since Christ will return to judge sin, Christians must do everything they can to bring people to Christ. All respondents also said that evangelization is the most important form of social engagement. However, thirteen (65%) said that the world’s ills will only be healed when everyone comes to know Christ. Regarding making the world a better place, thirteen (65%) say that economic, political, ecological, and social engagement should be a major priority alongside evangelism.

Church Relationship with the National Government and Leaders

Regarding CCF’s civic and political participation in the national government and its leaders, seven (33.33%) respondents said that they actively and unconditionally support the government and its policies. Eight (38.10%) said that they support specific religious policies but are critical regarding some issues. Six (28.57%) indicated that they maintain a position of neutrality in politics and government leaders. The survey results show no indications that they have encouraged congregants to vote for or against specific candidates or proposals in an election, publicly rebuked a government leader or policy, or publicly supported opposition parties or leaders through mass media, social media, or in the pulpit.

While Megachurch Leaders Strive to Remain Neutral in Terms of Politics, they Are Actively Supportive of Government Specific Policies Yet Critical to Some Issues

Table 23: CCF Relationship with the National Government Leaders
Source 19: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analysis, 3rdQ, 2022

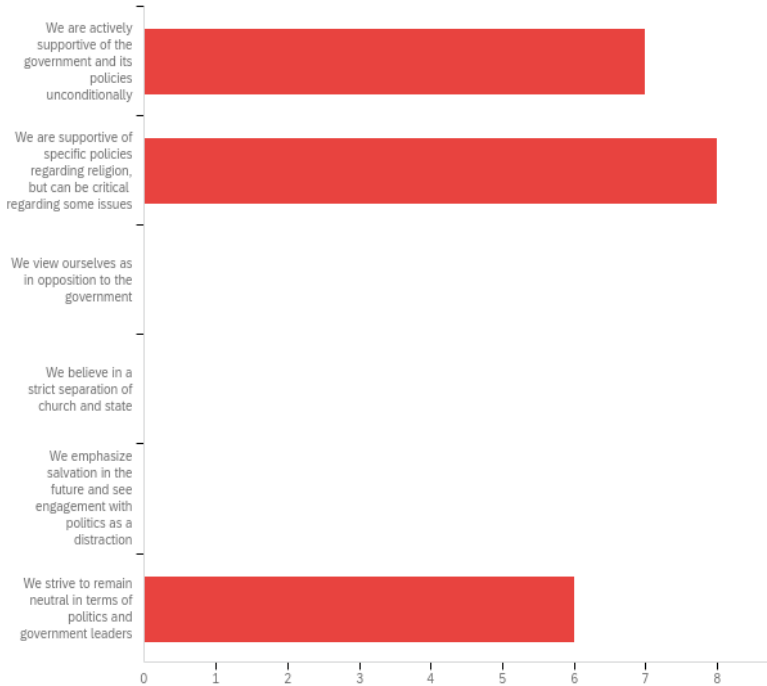
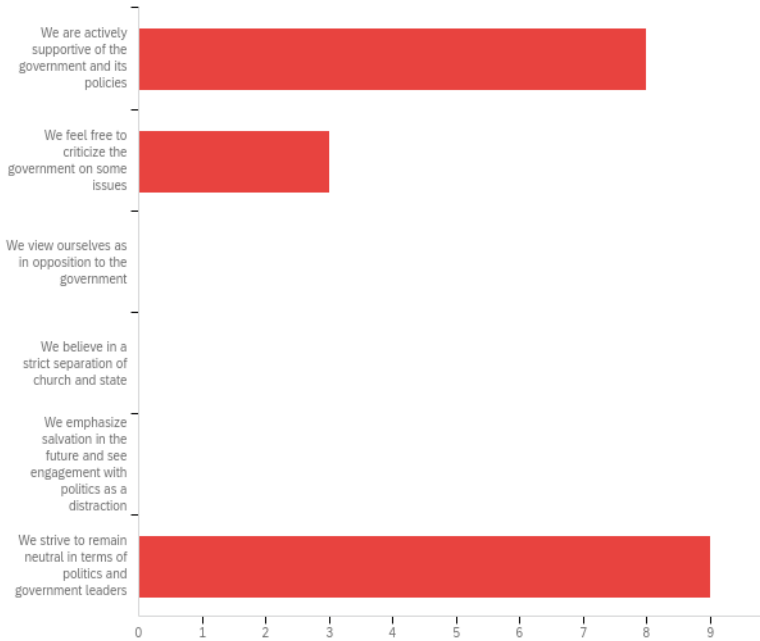


Table 24: VCF Relationship with the National Government Leaders
Source 20: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analysis,
3rd Quarter 2022



VCF leaders are unlikely to criticize the government and its policies. They primarily strive to actively support the government while remaining neutral toward politics and government leaders. Nine (45%) said that they seek to remain neutral with regard to politics and government leaders, and eight (40%) said that they actively support the government and its policies. Only three (15%) felt free to criticize the government on some issues. No leaders oppose the government nor adhere to the belief that there is a strict separation of church and state. Neither do they see political engagement as a distraction in their missiological and evangelistic emphasis on society.

Israel and the End-times

While All or Most of the Megachurch Leaders Regard Israel as a Chosen People of God, they Differ in their Understanding of the Role of the Nation of Israel in the End-Times

Table 25: CCF Leaders' Perspective on Israel and End-Times
 Source 21: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses, 3rdQ, 2022

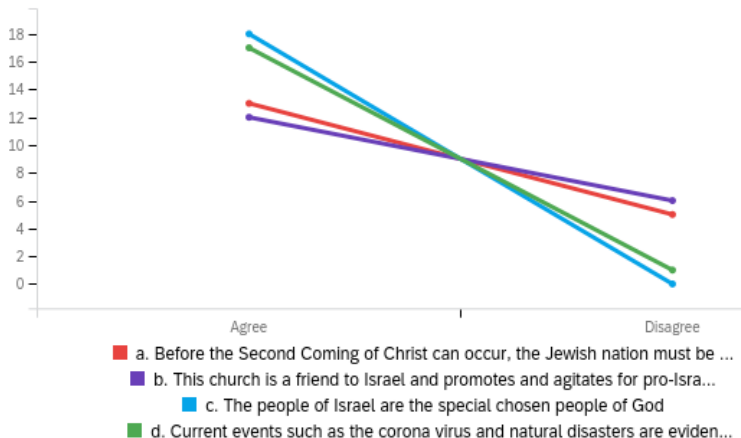
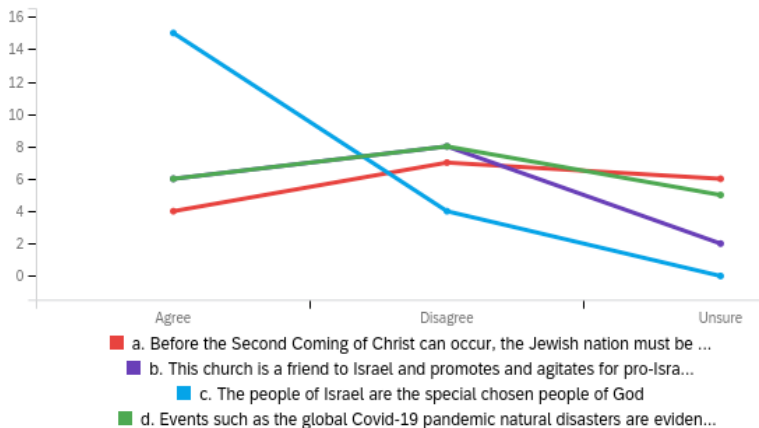


Table 26: VCF Leaders' Perspective on Israel and End-Times
 Source 31: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses, 3rdQ, 2022



Many Christian churches believe that the role of Israel in the end-times acts as a divine ‘clock’ to usher in the millennial reign of Christ on earth. Some expect the restoration and reunification of Israel as a nation is a pivotal and important event that signals the immanent eschatological reign of Jesus on earth. How do megachurches in the Global South view the Jewish people? What do they believe in, and what are these megachurches’ attitudes toward the people of Israel? When asked about the people of Israel, thirteen (61%) said that before the Second Coming of Christ, the people of Israel will be fully restored as a nation. Twelve (57%) said that CCF is a friend of Israel and advocate for pro-Israel political policies. Eighteen (85%) agreed that the people of Israel are God’s chosen people, and seventeen (80%) agreed that current events like the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters are evidence of the coming of the end times.

Regarding the perspective of VCF about Israel and the end times, four (20%) out of twenty agreed that the Jewish nation will be fully restored before the Second Coming of Christ. VCF are divided about their perspective on this issue. Six (30%) agreed that VCF is a friend of Israel and advocate for pro-Israel political policies. However, fifteen (75%) agreed that the people of Israel are God’s chosen people. Six (30%) agreed that the current events like COVID-19 and the natural disasters happening in our world today are evidence of the end times.

Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

The global health pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus disrupted everyday lives and sent millions of individuals to their graves. People suffered equally and life became more at risk than ever. However, Pew Research Center studies on the impact of religion in the Global North concluded that the pandemic strengthened and bolstered the faith of individuals and their compatriots. However, is this also true for religious communities in less developed countries like the Global South?

Regarding how COVID-19 has impacted CCF during the pandemic, twenty-one (100%) said that they offered pre-recorded services online that can be watched at any time. Twenty (95%) said that worship services are conducted live and remotely via internet streaming such as YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp. However, fourteen (66%) of them acknowledged that they closed down the church out of caution and concern due to government regulations and protocols. Thus, they conducted services live and remotely via television. As to how CCF creatively finds ways to connect with members, twenty one (100%) said that they offered virtual prayer meetings, twenty (95%) said they offered

live Bible Study over a streaming service such as Zoom, eleven (52%) said through podcasts, and seven (33%) said that CCF created other ways to connect with the members like discipleship group meetings, online leadership, family retreats, in-house foundational studies, various seminars and webinars for singles and couples, and children's ministries through zoom meetings. Small groups and Dgroups, GoViral, and Chatgroups were all done online.

Regarding the giving practices of CCF during the pandemic, twenty (95%) of leaders said that people continued to tithe and support the church at a reasonably average level because the church set up an online giving. Only one (5%) reported that giving practices declined significantly due to the difficulty of members to pay their bills. One said that their pastors visited the members' houses to collect their tithes. CCF does not depend on collection from the cell groups that make up their church.

Regarding the perceptions about the COVID-19 pandemic, twenty (95%) said that COVID-19 was an opportunity for them to be close to God. Seventeen (85%) said that the coronavirus was a wake-up call from God to change their ways. Twelve (60%) said that the COVID-19 pandemic was an example of a foretold biblical prophecy. Only five (25%) agreed that the coronavirus was a punishment from God to humanity for her sins.

As to how CCF leadership approached the coronavirus pandemic, twenty one (100%) said that it was through prayer and fasting, twenty of them (95%) recognized the contributions of medical sciences. Eighteen (85%) said that the role of faith was also essential. Six (28%) said other practical options like the strengthening the immune system, proper diet, exercise, supplemental medication, social distancing, and vaccination. On the other hand, to remain healthy and manage stress caused by the virus, it was recommended that the leaders find support groups and continuous education.

As to how CCF responded to the coronavirus pandemic, seventeen (80%) said that they provided food for the church members and wider community. Sixteen (76%) said they distributed relief goods and fed the wider community. Four (19%) said that the church was instrumental in providing virus testing sites and clinical assistance for people affected by the virus. Eleven (52%) said that they opened church facilities as housing accommodations for health and medical front-liners to rest and stay overnight. In addition, the churches donated COVID-19 prevention kits, medicines, PPEs, oxygen tanks, financial assistance, and medical gadgets like pulse oximeters for people with mild cases.

Megachurches Integrate Faith and Facts in Dealing with the COVID-19 Pandemic

Table 27: CCF Leaders’ Perspective on Dealing with COVID-19 Pandemic
Source 22: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses, 3rdQ, 2022

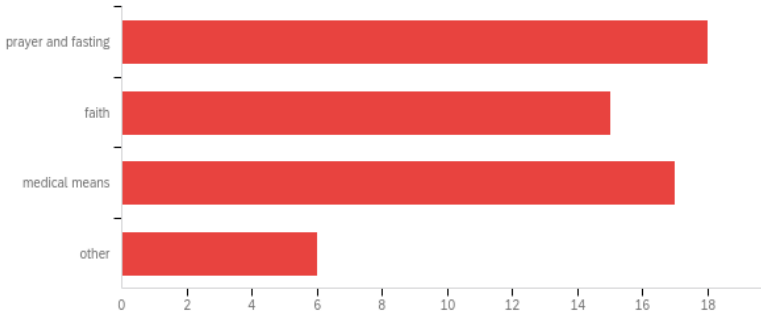
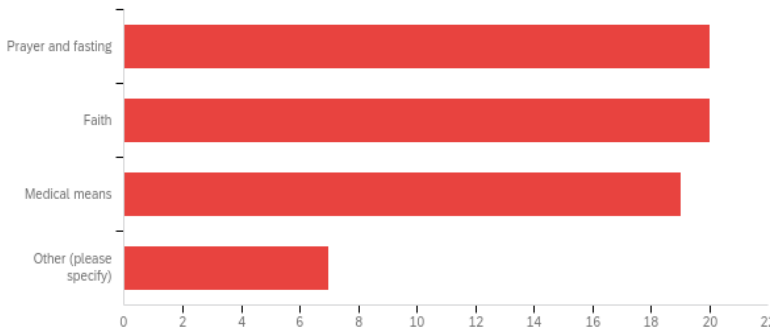


Table 28: VCF Leaders’ Perspective on Dealing with COVID-19 Pandemic
Source 23: Templeton Megachurch Project Leadership Survey Analyses, 3rdQ, 2022



Regarding the perceptions and attitudes of VCF pastors about the COVID-19 pandemic, although all of the twenty pastors (100%) acknowledged the role of medical and scientific discoveries and that they received the COVID-19 vaccinations, nine (45%) said that they were infected with the virus, while eleven (55%) were not infected. Fourteen (70%) personally knew more than ten people in their sphere of influence who were infected with the virus while five (25%) knew six to ten people who died because of COVID-19. Only one (5%) knew from one to five people who got ill because of the virus. However, when asked about

the church position regarding vaccination, eleven (55%) said that VCF recommended their members to get vaccinated. Nine (45%) said that they did not make a recommendation either way. When it comes to how they were affected personally by the pandemic, eighteen (90%) said that they became closer with God, sixteen (80%) said they grew closer to their immediate family, and eleven (55%) said they were locked down at their homes. Five (25%) lost a family member, and another five (25%) became ill. Four (20%) said that they separated from family and friends. Two (10%) said that they lost family income and experienced anxiety, depression, and mental fatigue. Only one (5%) said he/she was not impacted in any way by the pandemic.

Although studies around the globe showed that organized religion was instrumental in spreading the virus to the public, only a few studies have measured how churches have responded to the pandemic (Pew Research Center 2020). When it comes to VCF, twenty (100%) said that their churches had distributed food and other supplies to needy people. Nineteen (95%) said that they moved their worship services online and collected the tithes and offerings through online banking/financial outlets. Sixteen (80%) said that they contributed to the rule of law by urging everyone through media outlets to comply with safety protocols such as wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. While eleven (55%) said that they shut down all in-person services and activities and opened their church buildings to people who were sick or to healthcare providers, two (10%) said that they ministered to members affected and infected by COVID-19 through prayers and encouraging words, and organized a synchronized and online devotions 24/7.

Sociologically speaking, many competing theories and opinions about the COVID-19 pandemic exist. We listed these theories and asked the megachurch pastors for their views about COVID-19. Eighteen (90%) think of COVID-19 as a test of humanity's faith while thirteen (65%) said that it is a natural event not directly caused by God. Six (30%) said that this is an indicator of the end of times. Also, three (15%) said this it is a God-induced plague as in biblical times and therefore it is the punishment for humanity's sins. Only two individuals (10%) think that this is a man-made biological weapon. The unanimous response of VCF pastors regarding the impact of COVID-19 is that it bolstered and strengthened their faith in times of global pandemic. No VCF pastors responded that it weakened or affected their faith negatively.

Regarding the important lessons that the pandemic has taught the pastors, VCF pastor gave varying responses. Eighteen (90%) said that the church community is vital during times of crisis. Seventeen (85%) said that God is in control, not humanity, and that we must change our

priorities to focus on family. Thirteen (65%) think that modern life remains very fragile despite advancements in science and technology and therefore we have to be better stewards of the earth. Eleven (55%) said that they should live life more responsibly and not take anything for granted. Seven (35%) said that God's judgment over human sin is real and that government is ineffective in providing medical, economic, and social assistance in a crisis. Only three individual (15%) felt the church does not have to meet in person; it can also be effective online.

When it comes to the best way of dealing with the pandemic, twenty (100%) said that it is through prayer and fasting strong faith in God is important in times of crisis. Nineteen (95%) said that it is through medical science while seven (35%) suggested other ways of dealing with COVID-19, including compliance with government ordinances, social concern, and outreach to those affected much about the crisis. In addition, offering lodging in the facility for front-line medical practitioners, providing the medical institutions with food, and supporting government interventions to underprivileged people will strengthen solidarity and peace in the community.

Summary and Conclusion

At the outset of this study, we pointed out that megachurches are the new urban faces of Christianity. Because of the "mega-ness" of these churches, they are disconnecting themselves from traditional churches and creating a new kind of denomination that meets the needs of urbanized and digitalized societies. These denominations continue to embrace and celebrate transfer growth. Their innovative Christian witness attracts religious consumers from other religious organizations. Despite many scandals, misconceptions, and misinterpretations of their religious vocation, megachurch leaders lead ongoing innovation and the transformation of pastoral leadership. Megachurch leaders in CCF and VCF represent religious leaders who contextualize modernization to bring Christian spirituality to an age of secularization. Their ability and creativity to interject the Christian message in highly urbanized centers cannot be overlooked but offer important lessons. The crucial observations from this study corroborate this thesis.

While it is true that megachurches in Metro Manila, Philippines, offer diverse religious branding, styles, affiliations, and a certain degree of autonomy and independence, the same is true when it comes to the leaders' demographics at CCF and VCF. The survey shows that megachurch pastors are dominantly male and come from varied social and

professional backgrounds. They have diverse ages, social statuses, and theological orientations. Many are linguists with a high-level education and up-to-date training for ministry. They combine personal skills and talents in their religious vocation and calling. This demography signifies the diversity of giftings and the broad characteristics of intellectual and social capital that megachurch leaders can offer in the religious landscape.

In their attitude toward the Bible and doctrinal beliefs, most megachurch leaders place a high value on the Holy Scriptures. They recognize its authority, infallibility, and inspiration, and believe that the Bible can change and transform lives. The centrality of the Scripture in these two megachurches is seen by their adherence to the doctrine of salvation and deliverance prescribed by Scripture, and their expectations that Christians will exercise the power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. This conviction is associated with their doctrine of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, the reality of miracles, and the continuing operations of charisms and pneumatic gifts in the lives of Christians. Both megachurches associate the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the power of prayer with spiritual warfare and exorcism.

In highly urbanized cities, megachurches in the Philippines have the characteristics of spiritual centers: they form and shape beliefs, values, and practices. CCF and VCF subscribe to an Evangelical theology of salvation and deliverance, and they successfully use technology to teach theology. Both churches believe that heaven and hell exist and only faith in Christ and his redemptive work can spare human beings from eternal damnation. While salvation is instantaneous and progressive, active faith is crucial to the growth and maturity of new Christians. Both megachurches see deliverance as holistic in scope, including deliverance from spiritual/demonic oppression, physical conditions, and economic poverty. Though there is a slight difference in the view of positive confession among pastors, most megachurch leaders see the importance of positive confession of faith in prayer and petition.

Megachurches like CCF and VCF offer many expressions of Christian life and discipleship in a polarized society. Both megachurches have no significant differences in what they believe about disciples and discipleship. They fundamentally agree that Christians are placed in the world to become the practical expressions of Jesus' love and called to serve the world, especially poor and marginalized people. Both churches accept their role as a prophetic voice and moral conscience within the society, with acknowledgement that living a prosperous life impacts and influences the larger sector of society. These churches see the world as a battlefield between good and evil yet believe that God has a plan for

his people to become a channel of blessing through the generosity of material resources by giving the tenth percent of their income.

In connection to the observation above, megachurch worship services, fellowship meetings such as D-groups and discipleship classes, operationally emphasize weapons of spiritual warfare. The churches consider prayer, fasting, exorcism, bible memorization, etc. as necessary spiritual weapons in waging war against Satan and his demons. In addition, these churches were known for their 24/7 continuous prayer meetings during the pandemic. Though these churches are undecided if human suffering such as AIDS/HIV and the coronavirus is God's punishment for sin, both believe Satan and his demons are real, with the power to influence, harm, and cause evil in persons and social structures. The study also shows that CCF and VCF leaders think that ancestors have no control over our lives and reject ancestral worship.

The enormous financial and social capital of CCF and VCF is seen in the number of their adherents and followers attending their fellowship meetings and online worship services. Though these megachurches were severely affected by the global pandemic, they survived and thrived through the economic onslaught it brought. While this was not universally true among other megachurches in the Philippines or other countries in the Global South, these two were models of megachurches that remained strong, vibrant, and innovative in handling their financial resources amid the global pandemic.

Generally, these megachurches are apolitical in socio-political attitudes and engagement with the government. Their leaders strive to remain neutral in politics, but actively support some government-specific policies while being critical of others. They are neither restricted nor afraid to support, criticize, or modify their political responses to government policies and programs as they see fit. They engage their beliefs and values in the public sphere. For example, megachurches support the equality of genders but mostly reject homosexual orientations and abortion. The issues of contraception and birth control still need to be debated among megachurch leaders, though they are not afraid to express their opinions. When addressing society's social ills and structural problems, megachurches admit they cannot heal this world's ills. However, they believe that Christians must win people through evangelism and social engagement before Christ returns. Therefore, we conclude that megachurches will not only outnumber the traditional denominations but will also become a political force that could be used as political capital to influence national figures or impact societal change.

Most megachurch leaders regard Israel as a chosen people of God, but they differ in their understanding of the role of the nation of Israel in the end times. For example, CCF leaders believe that Israel as a nation is part of God's clock for the end times, while VCF leaders do not subscribe to that idea. In addition, both megachurch leaders differ in their opinions about COVID-19. The global pandemic signals the end of days for CCF, while most VCF pastors think it is not a sign of the end. However, the responses of both megachurches to the health crisis in the Philippines are worthy of emulation. Integrating faith and facts in their intervention programs, they educated, distributed goods, comforted, and empowered their congregants and members of their communities to thrive in times of crisis.

These megachurches were shrewd in using technology as a neutral instrument to advance the Christian mission during the pandemic as well as using it for the common good of others. Furthermore, their continuous technologization of theology and the digitalization of church services demonstrated that they viewed digital technology as an amoral and powerful tool to spread their Christian message and to fuel and maintain church growth.

Finally, this seminal research has limitations. Therefore, I call future scholars in the Global South to continue to explore and research uncharted topics of the megachurch phenomenon. Among these topics are the ongoing reality of the metaverse and meta-church; megachurches and transnationalism; megachurches and supernaturalism; megachurches and medical sciences; megachurch and the education of leaders; megachurches and politics; megachurches and economic development; megachurches and ecumenism; megachurches and enculturation; and megachurches and the divide between sacred and secular. I fervently pray that those following in our footsteps as academic researchers will venture into these issues in the near future.

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