

Look from the windows of megachurch Hillsong, what are the elements to foster church growth in Hong Kong?

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1. Introduction

In definition, megachurch refers to any Protestant congregation with a sustained average weekly attendance of 2,000 persons or more in its worship services. They usually have a charismatic senior minister. Community Care (Social service) and outreach ministries are in multitude extend. [\[1\]](#) In Australia, Hillsong Church (Hillsong Church) was celebrated its 25th year when we went to join their Sydney Hillsong Conference 2011 during 4-8 July.

Hillsong has regular attraction of 20,000 people to its weekend services in Australia [\[2\]](#) . Its church growth doubled in size every 12 months for the past four years.

[\[3\]](#)

With the emphasis of individual's relationship with the invisible God, self-recognition of personal evangelism is essential. Fundamentally, it has word-of-mouth marketing on the quality music and upbeat services.

In the "symbolic marketplace", Hillsong's size, rapid growth and commercial "success" has earned a lot in terms of finance, reputation, God's power and presence.

[\[4\]](#)

We have to consider our threefold common commitment (to the church, to its mission and to its renewal). [\[5\]](#) What can we learn from this megachurch Hillsong? I am looking from the windows of Hillsong. By reviewing the elements of Hillsong's church growth, different areas including church leadership, political influence, reach and outreach, community care, worshipping & youth ministry, and support, are discussed in details with local Hong Kong examples. Church's calling is to develop a Christian counter-culture rather than call to ape the world.

[\[6\]](#)

"A living church" is our ultimate goal.

2. Church Leadership

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In Bill Hybels' book "Courageous Leadership" says that excellence honors God and inspires people. [7] Pastors are not CEO.

Senior Pastor Brian Houston and his wife Bobbie were the main leaders in Hillsong [8]. Pastor Brian is a tall man with piercing blue eyes. "No worries" is his living style. His prayer and devotion alone with the Harley-Davidson stimulated cultural changes to Hillsong. He is attractive and has the charismas of being a preacher and church leader. Hillsong Church's self-proclaimed mission: "To reach and influence the world by building a large Bible-based church, changing mindsets, and empowering people to lead and impact every sphere of life" [9]

is leading to the successful growth of a megachurch. Do we have charismatic pastors like Hillsong Church's Brian & Bobbie Houston in Hong Kong?

In Hong Kong, most of the pastors in local churches are serious and always do not smile. About 90% whom I met are traditional scholar style. During the sermon, dignified atmosphere caused the congregants in stress. At least, these are my personal experience. In my opinion, there are a number of charismatic local pastors. Since the step down of Rev. Eddie Kin-Ming Ma from Shau Kei Wan Baptist Church (邵基灣浸信會 - 香港, Web: <http://skwbc.org/>

), his amazing worshipping with guitar and message were no longer been seen in the public. On the other hand, I really missed the vivid speech of Rev. Ping-Kwong Li of Methodist Church (香港)

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香港浸信會

, Web: <http://pkli.com/>

), who had retired and he was my chaplain when I was in primary school.

The **Hillsong (Leadership) Network** (Web: <https://hillsongnetwork.com/>) launched with the objective of connecting individuals and churches finally to be partnership. Local church leaders were encouraged to join the

Hillsong Network

for continuous support and growth. Hillsong's signature event – the annual Hillsong Conference in Sydney and its planted area welcomes local and even overseas church leaders to join.

Resources, online training and courses are available.

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Besides life-on-life discipleship, Christian education is important because “a living church is a learning church”. [\[10\]](#) Looking around, some of our local churches already have their own training center, seminary or bible institute. For example, in Yan Fook Bible Institute of EFCC Yan Fook Church ([\[11\]](#)), they have special programs for the so-called three stages for each “seeker” (new believer).

[\[11\]](#)
Rev. Patrick Wing-Chi So (

[\[12\]](#)) emphasized that the establishment of a system rather than depending on a specific person

[\[13\]](#) .Because of group leader training and bible training, they raised many coworkers, deacons and elders. Pastor Geoff Surratt in his book also mentioned about the most and the first common mistake of pastors in hindering the church growth is “Trying to do it all”

[\[14\]](#) . It makes pastors overworked and underproductive. There is no biblical warrant for the so-called one-man

band.
[\[15\]](#)

I had heard about a half-joking parable from our Executive Director, who is based in London: “Don’t keep monkeys on your back”. The most important thing is to take a proactive approach to building the pastoral team with right people and work together following the biblical principles. “When you are the first person, you are a crazy guy; when you have 1 more person, you are a leader; then, 3 as a CLOUD!”

[\[16\]](#)
(reference Matthew 18:20)

Other examples such as Church Institute in EFCC Tung Fook Church ([\[17\]](#)) and 611 College of 611 Bread of Life Christian Church (611 010 - 611 011) are closed group for the training of church leaders and parishioners only. We nowadays have about 1,250 local (Chinese) churches in Hong Kong [\[18\]](#), where the majority of them had less than 100 people. The training of people to be servants of God in proclaiming His Word is the mission of a churches such as

Alliance Bible Seminary of C & M A (

[\[19\]](#)

[\[20\]](#)

),

Evangel Seminary of EFCC (

[\[21\]](#)

[\[22\]](#)

[\[23\]](#)

), Divinity School of Chung Chi College of CUHK (

[\[24\]](#)

[\[25\]](#)

),

[\[26\]](#)

), and 20 others in Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong, we do not have a network like **Hillsong (Leadership) Network** for sharing of resources among pastors and church workers. In practice, we sometimes have difficulties to invite pastors of different denominations together to join a single event. If we are unity in Jesus, we could network pastors to share their experience in all aspect especially how to lead a church. Small churches might benefit from such valuable experience on how to establish a health church.

3. Political Influence

In Australia, Hillsong factor in political influence were hot discussion points. [\[27\]](#) In 2002, the Prime Minister, John Howard attended the opening of Hillsong’s 1,000th and lastest of Grahill Place Church, the largest, two square of Hillsong’s annual conference. [\[28\]](#)

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