

Help Wanted!

By Pastor Christopher Seah

Last Lord's Day, I asked each of us to consider assuming a role in our church's newly-minted organizational structure. That request is in line with our church's desire to be a *participative* congregation. We believe that God has not only called elders and deacons into ministry. Each member of PRPC also has a role to play in the up-building (*oikodomē*) of our church (Eph 4:12).

But now that the word is out, what ought we, the folks in the pews, be thinking? Some of us have had bad experiences in highly authoritarian churches. We remember hearing sermons from a self-proclaimed "apostle-prophet-leader," summoning his flock to submit to his rule...or else. And last week's little announcement by me may have sounded all too familiar to you (even though I did try to say things with a smile!). If you are in this camp, the first thing to be clear about is this: *No one is obligating you to serve anywhere on the organizational structure.* This means that you should not necessarily feel guilty about saying "no" to an invitation from a ministry leader to join his or her corner of church service. Why shouldn't you feel guilty? For one, God does not necessarily require you to serve in ministry *x*. He also does not want us making commitments hastily (Prov 20:25)—especially if it's just to make us look good to others. And he may have other priorities for us to fulfill at this moment. For instance, your family may be at a particular season of life where your commitment as a parent is particularly trying and especially needed. In such a situation, it would seem that the needs of your family take precedence over the church's. In fact, the way you serve the church is first by attending to your duties as a parent (cf. 1 Tim 3:5).

That said, we need to be clear on this: *God calls us to reach beyond our immediate families to bless others.* So even if you do not wish to commit to a part in the organizational structure at this time, God still calls you to serve our church in some way. You may serve in the way that the leaders have formally laid out, as a member of a ministry sub-committee. Or you could serve in other ways. The most basic service all of us must

render is edification and encouragement (1 Thess 5:11; Heb 10:25). So each of us must be thinking of ways to serve. There is no excuse not to.

But the organizational structure remains the key avenue of service. Since this structure is meant to support the most important ministries of the church (worship, education, fellowship, etc.), I would encourage you to seriously consider serving in one of those ministries before considering something else. Of course, if there is a service opportunity that you think your leaders have overlooked, please feel free to let us know.

I also want to address two fears that may keep us from serving. First, *the fear of making commitments*. While some of us may be at a particularly trying time in our lives and are not able to do much now, some of us always seem to be in this camp! We never have time to serve the church. The solution to this is to step out in faith, trusting that God would order our footsteps. It would also help to be clear to others from the start about how much time we can commit. That way, we don't commit to more than we can handle. Secondly, you have *the fear of making mistakes*. This is understandable. But an important part of our discipleship is making mistakes and learning from them! If we are constantly afraid of slipping, we will never achieve much for God. God is greater than our slips and often works through them to strengthen us.

As your pastor, I recognize the struggles that we have. In spite of our modern ingenuity, we cannot seem to make more time. All the gadgets meant to help us save time only increase the expectations that others make on us. So I have no intention of stressing us out. But I do care that we know one thing—*the holy pleasure of building God's House*. Would you give yourself to bless your brothers and sisters? Would you commit some time to strengthening God's Nation? "Dear Father, we are tired and fearful. But give us your bold and loving heart for your church. In Jesus' Name we ask, amen."