ARTICLES

Balancing Visible and Invisible Belonging for Korean Migrant Missional Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand

Hyeong-Kyoon Kim

Abstract

This paper explores how Korean migrant churches in Aotearoa New Zealand can find a balance between missions (understood as extending the Church) and Mission[1] (construed as participation in the *missio Dei*), in relation to their sense of belonging. For this purpose, the research uses a qualitative methodology interview method guided by interpretivism. The paper begins by identifying key contextual factors related to Koreans in New Zealand as migrants, Christians and missional beings. The responses of 31 research participants regarding what constitutes a "sense of belonging" are analysed in terms of visible and invisible belonging. Visible belonging is associated with churches that have strong boundaries, and invisible belonging is found in one's relationship with God; the two can be correlated with missions and Mission, respectively. The analysis suggests that a missional understanding can be a trigger for enabling interaction between visible belonging as missions and invisible belonging as Mission, through three missional concepts: purpose, progress and experience. Finally, the paper suggests practical ways that Korean churches in New Zealand can balance missions and Mission by following three missional guidelines.

Keywords: Korean church; Mission and missions; Belonging; Missional; Migrant

Purpose and structure

The phrase "Mission vs missions" has been used to illustrate different perspectives on the mission of the church. "Mission" and "missions" are at times controversial issues in Korean churches (Han 2012: 90–99). For example, some Korean churches

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1   In order to distinguish these two terms, the author has capitalized Mission throughout the article.

that emerged from evangelical movements are strongly oriented toward church growth, and thus emphasize the importance of missions (Han 2012: 93–96; Ma, 2017). In contrast, other churches with a more ecumenical outlook tend to focus on Mission as *missio Dei* (An & Park, 2008: 313).

Korean churches in New Zealand are not free from this controversial issue. However, both Mission and missions are essential to live out Jesus' command to embody life in the Kingdom of God. Therefore, the primary purpose of this paper is to explore the meaning of *belonging* in Korean churches in New Zealand with the aim of building a bridge between Mission and missions through missional perspectives.

With this purpose in mind, a sampling of 31 Korean Christians in New Zealand answered the question: "What is the sense of belonging?" Their responses can be summarized in three categories: *visible belonging*, *invisible belonging*, and *missional belonging*. *Purpose*, *process* and *experience* are missional triggers that provide a stepping stone to establishing a bridge between Mission (invisible belonging) and missions (visible belonging).

The paper is divided into two main sections. The first section explores three contextual terms: *Korean churches*, *missional*, and *belonging*. This section also provides the rationale for incorporating the contextual background in missional and practical theology studies. The second section is the analysis of the 31 interviews, which identifies three different understandings of belonging: *visible belonging*, *invisible belonging*, and *missional belonging* as a catalyst for synthesizing the first two concepts. Following the analysis, the paper suggests practical ways to enable Korean missional churches in New Zealand.

Scope

This research is located in the fields of missional and practical theology studies. Missional and practical theology approaches are linked to contextual interpretation, although the two approaches have different focal points. For example, the field of missional studies tends to emphasize direction, like a route on a map, whereas practical theology suggests practices for achieving visible results. Despite these differences, the interpretation of contexts is an essential starting point for both approaches.

Swinton and Mowat describe practical theology as "recognising and respecting the diversity of interpretation within the various expositions of performed gospel" (Swinton & Mowat 2006: 5). In other words, practical theology focuses on observing

and interpreting context through "performed gospel", which means the gospel realized in our context. Contextual interpretation is also important in missional studies. As Darrell Guder writes, "Our understanding of truth is always an interpretation relative to our context and cultural understanding" (Guder and Barrett 1998: 40).

In terms of methodology, this paper uses an interview method based on a qualitative and interpretivist methodology which is useful for analyzing contexts in light of practical and missional perspectives. The aim is to observe Korean churches in New Zealand and to encourage these churches to be missional churches both within and beyond ethnic boundaries.

This study does have certain limitations in terms of sampling and translation. First, although 31 interviews provide a suitable sampling size for the case study, the sampling is limited in the sense that the participants were drawn from only two Korean churches. However, I maintain that this is nonetheless a representative sampling, because the two churches are the oldest Korean churches in the two largest cities and Korean communities in New Zealand. These two churches can thus adequately represent migrant Korean Christians' perspectives despite the geographical limitations.

The second limitation is related to translation issues, as it is impossible to translate an interview from Korean to English without changes in nuance and emphasis. As a result, I have used an interpretivist methodology. This is a methodology in the social sciences that is suitable for contextual analysis because it offers scope for a variety of interpretations related subjectively to specific contexts (Furlong and Marsh 2010). This paper accurately records interviewees' perspectives, but some words, phrases and sentences may be interpreted by the researcher to provide a clearer meaning in English.

Three contextual terms

The title of this paper incorporates three main terms: *Korean churches*, *missional*, and *belonging*. These words have developed in a specific context, and thus it is necessary to define the three terms contextually. First, 'Korean Christians' in New Zealand construct their own boundaries as a way to interpret their Christian faith within Korean culture. This is in line with Bevans' characterization of contextual theology as being based on "present human experience" (Bevans 2002: 4).

Second, the term "missional" first emerged from real issues in North American churches, so it is impossible to understand "missional" without this contextual under-

standing (Guder and Barrett 1998). Finally, the sense of "belonging" obviously cannot be excepted from contextual understandings. This section explains the contexts of the three core terms in this order: the Korean church, the missional understanding and the sense of belonging. It also explores how a possible relational structure can be built between the three contextual categories.

Korean church context

The character of the Korean church is best described in terms of diverse characteristics developing in different times and locations, because every church has roots in living societies, united by a belief in an unchanging divine being. Contexts rely on "personal and communal experience, culture, social location and social change" (Bevans 2002: 7).

Applying this claim to Korean churches makes it clear that they are contextual churches through their experience, culture, social location and experience of social change (Guder and Barrett 1998). Korean churches in New Zealand have erected unique boundaries to help them understand and live in the New Zealand context. They are grounded culturally in Korean culture and locationally in New Zealand. These churches have experienced migrant life and extreme social changes from Korea to New Zealand.

Korean migrant churches in New Zealand are comprised almost exclusively of Korean rather than other ethnicities, and the Korean language plays a pivotal role in these churches (Chang, Morris and Vokes 2006). In contrast, the majority of New Zealand churches are rooted in European or, to a lesser extent, Maori cultures, so the English and Maori languages are essential in their churches to sustain religious and cultural identities. Koreans in New Zealand refer to churches that use English and consist mainly of Europeans (*Pakeha*) as 'Kiwi churches' (Chang, Morris and Vokes).

Korean migrant churches in New Zealand attempt to preserve their culture through Korean Christianity, an approach deemed the "anthropological model" by Bevans, who writes that "The primary concern of the anthropological model is the establishment or preservation of cultural identity" (Bevans 2002: 54). Korean churches in New Zealand have a strong connection with their members' experiences as Koreans and as migrants, and with the Korean language. Because of these strong bonds, members of Korean churches can recognize their differences and similarities in relation to broader New Zealand society.

In New Zealand census results, Korean Christians are categorized in three ways: their experience in Korea; their experience in New Zealand; and their experience as

migrants moving between Korea and New Zealand. Figure 1 shows the percentages of Christians in three different contexts: Christians in South Korea, Christians in New Zealand as a whole, and Korean Christians in New Zealand. The percentage of Christians is decreasing in all three contexts, so the numerical weakening of Christianity is common to each context.
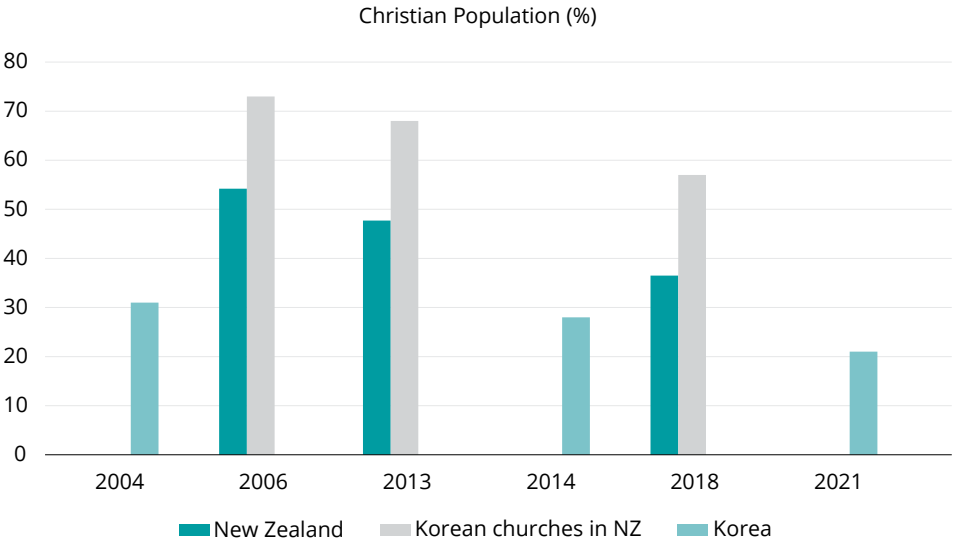
Christian Population (%)

Korean and New Zealand censuses are tabulated in different years, so it is not possible to perfectly compare the percentages of Christians in Korea and New Zealand. However, while the census data is drawn from different years, the purpose of this comparison is to check trends.

Korean Christianity in New Zealand has unique characteristics compared with Christianity in Korea and in New Zealand as a whole, regardless of denomination. First, the percentage of Korean Christians in New Zealand is significantly higher than in the other two contexts. According to three censuses in New Zealand, the percentage of Koreans who were Christians decreased from 73% in 2006, to 68% in 2013, to 57% in 2018 (Stats.govt.nz, 2018). But while the percentage of Christians among Koreans in New Zealand has indeed decreased, these statistics show that Koreans in New Zealand have a solid Christian culture compared with those in Korea itself.

Christianity has been one among several religions in Korea from the missionary period until now (Gallop.co.kr, 2021). In contrast, in the New Zealand Korean commu-

nity, Christianity is the main religion, and the percentage is more than double that of Christians in Korea. As a result, Koreans belonging to religions other than Christianity are comparatively marginal in the Korean community in New Zealand (Kim, Hocking and McKenzie-Green 2016). The point is that Koreans in New Zealand tend to cultivate a more Christian-centric culture than Koreans in Korea.

Moreover, compared with the overall percentage of Christians in New Zealand, the Korean Christian percentage in New Zealand is outstanding. Theologians and sociologists interpret this phenomenon as one in which Korean migrants believe that their Christianity plays a crucial role in how they are perceived in the social (secular) arena (Butcher & Wieland 2013). For example, Butcher and Wieland illustrate the perception of the Korean church in New Zealand through the phrase "God and Golf".

One reason for the high percentage of Christians in the Korean community in New Zealand may be that new migrants struggle to integrate into New Zealand society because of the linguistic and cultural differences (Chang, Morris and Vokes 2006; Morris, Vokes and Chang 2008). Interestingly, several other migrant ethnicities also show a higher percentage of Christian affiliation in New Zealand than in their home countries (Stats.govt.nz 2018). Korean churches and perhaps other migrant churches in New Zealand offer members a safe space in which to escape from the stresses of integrating into New Zealand society. In sum, Korean churches' characteristics in New Zealand are shaped by their migrant context.

Missional perspective

Defining the word "missional" is not straightforward because this terminology is a fairly recent addition to the field of missiology, emphasizing certain distinctive directions related to mission (Roxburgh and Boren 2009: 30). Missional has been defined briefly as "the doing of the mission" (Ott, Strauss & Tennent 2010). However, Roxburgh and Boren highlight the danger of only "doing" something to achieve visible results and escape confusion between missional churches and the so-called "attractive" churches.

Roxburgh and Boren offer two helpful warnings for the missional journey: "Beware of formulas for creating missional churches, and beware of missional church models" (2009: 23–25). Because the missional movement is shaped by specific contexts in different places and times, Roxburgh and Boren assert the importance of reading contexts carefully. Missional movements are linked inextricably to the act of interpreting contexts.

The starting point of "reading context" in a missional movement is the word "here" – "where we stand" (Roxburgh and Boren 2009: 122). "The missional journey begins where people are, not from some vision for where we would like them to be" (2009: 123). This is a crucial point in connecting the missional movement and local churches, because "the local church we belong to is shaped by a history that forms the ways it works and how people interrelate" (2009: 124).

This statement can be applied to the Korean churches in New Zealand insofar as they are shaped by a migrant history that has influenced the ways their context unfolds and how they relate to people in the host country. The Gospel and Our Culture Network has examined missional boundaries in North America along these lines, and found that regional context plays a pivotal role in this missional network (Guder and Barrett 1998: 7–12).

Missional approaches seek to erect a bridge between the gospel and local culture. "The gospel is always translated into a culture, and God's people are formed in that culture in response to the translated and Spirit-empowered Word" (Guder and Barrett 1998: 11). This means that a missional approach offers a meaningful gospel lens through which to settle in a new culture, and revises forms of Christian proclamation in the light of culture (Guder and Barrett 1998: 12). Therefore, when interpreting the missional movement in the Korean church context in New Zealand, previous experiences related to the Korean church will be their past "here" context, and more recent experiences of the sense of belonging will influence their present "here".

Moreover, the missional movement has the energy to move toward *missio Dei* – the Mission of God – beyond visible results seen in church programmes and campaigns (Franke 2020; Terry 2015). Missional language does not limit a church's boundaries, and for this reason Alan Roxburgh uses the phrase "missional people" instead of "missional church" to focus on missional life broadly understood (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2011). In this perspective, missional language can be a trigger to move beyond a church-centred life. This is a transformation from "God-Church-World" to "God-World-Church" (An & Park 2008: 273–81).

The sense of belonging

The third key word or category is "belonging." Generally, this refers to the sense of belonging in a certain place or community. Discussions of belonging in a church context may include, for example, reflections on how to grow membership. However, the sense of belonging encompasses not only such visible aspects but also an invisible aspect, focused on belonging to God.

Visible belonging may refer to "fitting in" in an institution, group, ethnicity and so on, and invisible belonging may be experienced through culture or traditions (Kim 2021: 73–75; Painter, 2013: 1–2). But even though the sense of belonging can be divided into these two "types", it is impossible to separate them too rigidly, because the sense of belonging is connected with the real world in all its dimensions.

According to Emile Durkheim, the sense of belonging in a moral community is the foundation of religious life, and he calls this community a church (1995: 44). Therefore, the church as a moral community is a visible manifestation of belonging. Similarly, Max Weber (2005) asserts that the sense of belonging is expressed in cultural and religious communities. In this sense, a denomination established on the basis of religious belief can create a visible boundary around the sense of belonging, and a cultural boundary like Christendom can create an invisible sense of belonging.

Secularization theorists assume that religious communities and gatherings will fade away over time in the societies where they are located (Dobbelaere, 2009: 602). As a case in point, religions such as Christianity, the major religion in Europe in the past, came to maintain a cultural function instead of a religious one. Secularization theorists thus claim that Christianity in Western countries is an example of invisible belonging through culture (Davie 1994; 2002).

Secularization theorists rely on an understanding of visible belonging to strengthen their theory that religion will fade away in modern societies. Church attendance or membership is seen as evidence of visible belonging. Rational Choice theorists evince a similar understanding of visible belonging to support Christianity's revival in the United States through the numerical evidence of membership and attendance (Stark and Finke 2000).

Sociological approaches do not lean toward one side of the sense of belonging, visible or invisible. They see the meaning of the sense of belonging not as unchangeable but as influenced by contextual factors. Philosophical or ontological research tends to situate belonging in invisible boundaries like culture, and practical or epistemological research, such as a census, attempts to provide clear evidence for visible belonging.

For example, researchers at Pew Research Centre interpret church belonging in terms of affiliation with a congregation or denomination (Mohamed, Cox, Diamant and Gecewicz 2021). This means that unaffiliated people do not "belong", even if they have Christian beliefs, so the sense of belonging is restricted to visible forms of

church boundaries. New Zealand censuses have interpreted belonging to denominations and other groups in the same way (Stats.govt.nz 2018).

Interactions among the three contextual terms

In the previous sections, I explained the three contextual terms at the heart of this study: *Korean churches*, *missional* and *belonging*. These concepts are related to each other. For example, missional is based on "here," where Korean churches are located, so the fact that Korean churches in New Zealand are migrant churches is an influential context. Since belonging consists of two aspects, visible and invisible, visible church boundaries and invisible cultural boundaries also interact in Korean churches.

In this interaction, the Korean church is an influential factor for missional movement, as a context for developing a sense of belonging beyond visible boundaries. However, it is also possible to go in the opposite direction, such that the sense of invisible belonging can develop into visible contexts through a missional understanding.

The understanding of mission has two dimensions: one is *Mission* as *missio Dei*, which emphasizes God's mission, and the other is *missions*, which describes the churches' human activities to extend the gospel (Franke 2020; Gailey & Culbertson 2007: 8; Terry 2015). In this study, I adopt a new frame to describe Mission and missions: *Mission–invisible belonging–missio Dei*; and *missions-visible belonging-church* (its human side). Balancing visible and invisible belonging therefore means balancing Mission and missions in Korean migrant churches. The coming sections will address the interrelation between the three contextual terms by analyzing interviews with 31 Korean Christians in New Zealand.

Analysing interviews

The earlier sections explained the three core contextual terms by drawing on theoretical and scholarly sources, in order to establish an interacting frame for the three words. This section investigates this frame in Korean churches in New Zealand by means of a qualitative methodology, based on 31 interviews with Korean Christian migrants in New Zealand. The interviewees' ages spanned from people born in the 1940s to people born in the 2000s, and their migrant years ranged from the 1980s to the 2010s. In addition, some interviewees were born in New Zealand and are known as the second generation (Kim 2021: 170).

The interviewees were primarily recruited for my PhD research, so this paper reinterprets their earlier interviews through a missional lens. Specifically, this study interprets interviewees' answers to the question, "What is the sense of belonging?"

To maintain confidentiality, I use fictional names instead of the names of the participants. This section first explores specific expressions of belonging related to the Korean church, followed by insights regarding how the concepts "missional" and "belonging" are understood by the interviewees.

Visible belonging in Korean churches

Korean churches have two primary visible aspects. First, some concrete information is recorded and maintained to indicate membership, beliefs and identities. Second, other words and activities focus on the people's context as migrants. These visible aspects might be summarized in two orientations: human-centred, and church-centred.

Visible belonging can be expressed by tangible boundaries in the church. One interviewee, Gong Ji-Hu, described the sense of belonging as providing a way to maintain Korean culture by emphasizing the boundaries within the church that separate and preserve Korean identity and culture over against the dominant "Kiwi" identity and culture.

The Korean church is thus a place-based boundary within which to teach and enact Korean culture. In the church, Korean migrants can affirm their uniqueness and their differences from the dominant New Zealand society. Lee An, who is second generation, described the sense of belonging in terms of recognizing these differences, and she also felt a stronger sense of belonging in a church group whose members are of a similar age. Park Do, who is also second generation, likewise emphasized finding a sense of belonging in a Korean Christian group which has shared interests.

In addition, interviewees focused on institutional norms and organizations, which are boundaries in themselves. The denomination was one of the crucial reasons for choosing a church after migrating from Korea to New Zealand, because the Presbyterian denomination provides a lens through which they understand Christianity. Korean migrants thus naturally prefer to attend church in the same denomination to which they belonged in Korea.

This explains why the Presbyterian Church is the main denomination of Korean migrants in New Zealand, because it is the major denomination in Korea, compared with Methodists, Anglicans, Pentecostals and others. Denominational boundaries are crucial in maintaining Korean Christians' religious identities. Maintaining their identity as Korean, Christian and Presbyterian expresses a church-centred understanding of visible belonging.

In addition, several interviewees described the Korean church in New Zealand as a kind of base camp for nurturing social activities and relationships. This is because the Korean church is one of the most comfortable places to meet other Koreans, in the face of the larger context in which New Zealand is a comparatively strange place. These are trusting relationships, as Korean churches represent family, home and friends.

Relationships with others in the church thus play a leading role in constructing visible boundaries. Kim Sung-Hyun emphasized that the Korean church is a place for "working together", which can also be understood in terms of socializing with friends. Hwang Eun explained that feeling a sense of belonging in the church means "living together like a family and helping together".

Korean churches are also crucial for socializing without language barriers, and Butcher and Wieland describe Korean churches as "golf communities" (Butcher and Wieland 2013). Korean migrants feel similarities with other Koreans regardless of faith, but visible membership in a church is a safety boundary for developing and extending their relationships and feeling connected to others as social beings. These relationships illustrate the second aspect of visible belonging, the human-being-centred focus.

Invisible belonging in Korean churches

The previous section focused on the role of visible belonging in migrant Korean churches in New Zealand, but that is only a part of understanding what the sense of belonging means for people in these Korean churches. Invisible aspects of belonging show the desire to belong to God rather than to manufactured systems, institutions and practices. Invisible belonging is closer to the *missio Dei* perspective.

According to Choi Sung-Je, the sense of belonging is a sensitive issue and he describes the sense of belonging as being "a child of God." Park Hyun also explains the sense of belonging as "to stay in God". Many Korean Christians in New Zealand, especially the first-generation migrants, converted to Christianity from other religions after migrating to New Zealand. Hence, they firmly believe that migrating to New Zealand was God's plan to save them. Park Hyun and Choi Sung-Je thus both say, "I am elected" as a child of God when explaining the sense of belonging. The "child of God" symbolism focuses on the relationship with God instead of membership in a religious institution.

In the Confucian perspective, humans are connected to the divine being, Dao (道) or Tae-Kuk (太極) through Jung (情) or Yang-Ji (良知). And recovering the harmo-

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nious relationship is illustrated the healthy relationship between parents and children (Kim, 2000; 2022: 152–55). Moreover, humans are related to the whole world, including animals and nature, via Jung or Yang-Ji. *Missio Dei* for Korean Christians is underpinned in part by these Confucian principles. In other words, belonging in the sense of being a "child of God" is a Korean expression based on the Confucian understanding found in passages such as John 14.11 and 15.5.

Among six first-generation interviewees who migrated to New Zealand after 2010, five articulated their understanding of belonging in terms of their relationship with God, using phrases such as "a child of God", "my root is God", "always [I] belong to God", "belong to God" and "the relationship between God and me". These expressions all emphasize the relationship with God instead of the sense of belonging to institutions.

Lee Gao explained the difference between social belonging in the form of "membership" and religious belonging, stating that belonging is about one's relationship with God, which is not found only through being a member of a church. Of the 17 interviewees who were from the first generation, 11 also stressed that the sense of belonging is not found only within social boundaries but in one's relationship with God. As one said, "The sense of belonging is not [related to] U-Ri as a church, Korean churches and denominations, but to the relationship with God."

Understanding the sense of belonging in terms of one's relationship with God was not only found in the first generation but also in the younger generation. Lee Bun-Woo described the sense of belonging in this way: "As I belong to God, [I practise God's love] even though I meet unfamiliar people who are different from me. [This is because] they are also one of God's creatures." This sense of belonging plays a pivotal role in developing one's identity. Choi Hee-Su added that because the core of belonging, which is the relationship with God, is nurtured in a church, church membership is one way to enhance this relationship with God.

The children of the first generation of migrants used phrases such as these to illustrate the sense of belonging: "God stays with me", "God's plan" and "[being part of] one body". Kwon Suk's starting point for describing the sense of belonging was a question: "Where do I belong?" He already has membership in a Korean church and strong friendships with other Koreans there, but his relationship with God is nonetheless the core element in his sense of belonging.

Prioritizing the invisible sense of belonging was also spelled out in Cho Il-Eun's explanation of the connection she makes between belonging and identity: "Clearly, before

I had firmly believed [in God], I felt that identity issues were very important [in my life]. Am I a Korean or a New Zealander? Even though I am a Korean and Kiwi by half and half, the proportion of the mixture was different. In this situation, [I] was confused by having no absolute standard [to recognize my identity]. [However], this problem was solved after finding belief [in God]."

In summary, research participants preferred to use phrases such as the following to explain invisible belonging, regardless of different migrant generations, genders and ages: belong to God, the child of God, unity with God, in Christ, one body, invisible relationship with God. In other words, their invisible belonging prioritized divine being rather than human beings and manufactured systems.

Missional movement as trigger

I have described above the relationship between membership in Korean churches as a visible sign of belonging and belonging to God as an invisible aspect. These two features interact continuously, and there is therefore a need for a catalyst, such as a missional orientation, to create interacting movement or an active interrelation between the two. This section analyses possible trigger words for this missional movement which emerged in the interviews. These trigger words that stimulate interaction between visible and invisible belonging can be divided into three categories: *purpose*, *progress* and *experience*.

The first category is related to the *purpose* of becoming church, but it is not results-oriented. Interviewees dreamed of the church as the Kingdom of God, which is impossible to achieve on earth. Lee Sung-An asserted that the final goal of belonging is "the recovery of the image when created by God". Kim So-Mi said that belonging is not an artificial but a natural phenomenon; there can be no intention to gain it because she already belongs to God. Kim Ham-In also felt that belonging is not something one can attain or achieve on one's own, whether it is manifested visibly or invisibly.

In expressing the original purpose of the church, interviewees tended to use words associated with essential Christian faith, such as "salvation", "calling", "comfort", "the place of meeting God", "hope", "love", "Christ" and "identity". The interviewees used these words to describe why they believe the church exists on earth. Interviewees hoped to develop resilience related to these more idealized purposes of the church, in the face of several disappointing experiences of church, such as church splits, conflicts and corruption. Shin Ji-Su emphasized the importance of flexibility and resilience in the life of faith, and these traits could be seen as triggers to stimulate a healthy interrelation between visible and invisible experiences of belonging.

The second triggering category is *progress* in Christian discipleship, and this category is closely connected with practical actions. This can be seen in interviewees' references to the importance of special acts of faith, such as love, sharing and contributing. Interviewees hoped to make progress toward becoming mature Christians through actions that grow out of belief.

However, these actions do not focus only on individual tangible achievements but on inner spiritual progress or growth in the life of faith. Many interviewees asserted that these actions are the responsibility of all Christians. Gong stated that belonging is not only to a church but to the life of a Christian. Son Mi-Ju had a similar perspective, describing belonging as "the progress of reaching to God in my life." Actions such as love, sharing and giving, which are essential to living daily life as a Christian, synthesize or integrate visible belonging to a church and invisible belonging to God.

The last category which can be a missional trigger is *experience*. Belonging is not only a theoretical concept but an experienced reality. According to interviewee Lee Gao, the sense of belonging is "living together". This is a meaningful understanding of belonging because it is not only an individual experience but a communal experience of Christian life. Living together can connect all of the aspects related to belonging: sharing, solidarity, love, recovery and so on. "Sharing" is impossible to do alone, since sharing needs to be done with other beings.

To summarize, the key words highlighted in the interviews can all be grouped under the "missional" concept, and these words are not result-oriented but progress-oriented, in the service of realizing the purpose of the church and the life of faith. Progress-oriented words include aspects of experience beyond individual activities; progress is understood as spiritual and moral development, which has concrete implications for the actions we take. These missional concepts can be a catalyst to balance and interweave the visible sense of belonging found within the boundaries of Korean churches in New Zealand and the invisible manifestations of belonging associated with *missio Dei*.

Implications

Defining Korean churches in New Zealand is impossible without taking into account the Korean migrant context, and so the earlier sections of this paper explored Korean migrants' understanding of the church in light of their migrant experience. In light of their visible and invisible experiences of belonging in relation to their Christian faith, I introduced a missional approach to integrate a *missions* orientation based on visible

belonging with a *Mission* orientation associated with invisible belonging to God. This section suggests possible implications for Korean churches in New Zealand.

According to *Christian Life*, a newspaper published for Korean Christians in New Zealand, there are 109 Korean churches or Christian institutions in New Zealand. They exist largely to support Koreans rather than other ethnicities or English-based Christians (christianlife.nz, n.d.). Less than 10% of Korean churches in New Zealand belong to "Kiwi" (English-based) denominations such as the PCANZ (Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand), Elim, GPCNZ (Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand) and others (onechurch.nz n.d.).

There are several reasons Korean churches find it hard to relate to Kiwi churches, but the central reason is differing understanding of "missions and Mission". Korean churches put considerable effort into overseas missions, in countries such as Vanuatu, Fiji, and other Asian countries. However, the Korean migrant churches do not always sense this same zeal for missions in the English-based denominations in New Zealand.

But how do the missions of the Korean migrant churches in New Zealand interact with Mission, with its sense of invisible belonging? First, the "purpose" of missional orientation is a valuable way to identify Christianity's unchangeable purpose on earth, in the process mitigating differences between ethnicities, denominations or religious traditions. Korean migrant perspectives can be very helpful in this regard. As one example, the belief of all Christians in an eternal life with a return to a heavenly home, an original homeland, triggers Korean migrants' connections with other Christians in New Zealand, because we are all migrants on earth.

Second, the "progress" of missional orientation has the potential to move beyond the church-centred focus that is geared toward church growth to encompass a spiritual growth focus on living a mature Christian life. In this regard, the chaplaincy system, which exists outside the church, is a valuable point of connection with non-Christians. In New Zealand, pastoral care for students in schools is mandated by law and must be provided (NZQA 2021). Chaplaincy can connect students regardless of religion or background, and for international students, having a chaplain of a similar background can help to mitigate their isolation.

In a larger sense, encouraging Korean church members to join local non-profit organizations or charities might stimulate Korean Christians to live out their Christian faith through acts of love and service outside the church walls or concerns about church growth. The "progress" missional element is also not only for individuals but for

communities. Therefore, encouraging Korean churches to work with other denominations, charities, government agencies or other institutions is pivotal in bridging the gap between the churches' missions and God's Mission.

Conclusion

This paper has explored three contextual terms related to Korean churches in New Zealand: *Korean churches*, the *missional* orientation and the meaning of *belonging*. Through this exploration, the understanding of the Korean church context was linked inextricably both to *visible belonging*, in the form of missions which are human and institutional works, and *invisible belonging* in the form of Mission as *missio Dei*. Both missions and Mission co-exist in Korean migrant churches in New Zealand.

However, while missions and Mission are ideally essential aspects of all churches, they are at times in conflict in Korean churches in New Zealand. This prompted me to explore more deeply Korean Christians' understandings of what it means to "belong" as migrant Korean Christians in New Zealand. This paper therefore analysed, through a representative sampling of interviews with Korean Christians in New Zealand, their understandings of the sense of belonging, highlighting both visible and invisible manifestations of belonging. Their perspectives, in turn, suggested possible resources (related to purpose, process and experience) for balancing missions and Mission in New Zealand's Korean churches, with the aim of being a healthy missional church in the midst of their contextual realities as an ethnic minority in New Zealand.

About the author

Hyeong-Kyoon Kim moved from South Korea to Aotearoa New Zealand in 2017. He is interested in the voice of migrants, especially Asians, in New Zealand. He lives in Palmerston North with his family and works at HanMaEum Church and Alphacrucis College, Aotearoa New Zealand.
Contact: hyeong.k.kim@gmail.com

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