

Guidelines for Local Church Management of the church of Christ in Thailand for self- reliant in the Church Region 1, Upper Northern Thailand

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Abstract

This study aims to: (1) examine the current state and (2) expectations regarding local church management. Data was collected from 228 members of the church council in region 1 using questionnaires; and (3) analyzed guidelines for local church management for self-reliance. Data was obtained through interviews with 28 local church executive committee members and district pastors from churches in region 1. Quantitative data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while qualitative data were analyzed through inductive summarization. The findings revealed that the overall effectiveness of local church management is currently at a high level. Specifically, the efficiency in operations and improvements was found to be high, whereas planning and evaluation were rated at a moderate level. Local churches expressed high expectations for enhancing management efficiency, particularly in planning, operations, and improvements. Despite ongoing planning efforts, achieving self-reliance still faces challenges, especially in financial management and leadership development. Implementing the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) management approach and developing personnel capabilities systematically can strengthen the church's capacity for sustainable self-reliance.

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Therefore, emphasis should be placed on leadership development, establishing an efficient management system, and generating stable income to ensure long-term self-reliance for local churches.

Keywords: Guidelines for Management, Local Churches, Church of Christ in Thailand, Self Reliance

Introduction

Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) are crucial mechanisms that focus on providing services or generating social benefits without seeking financial profit. The role of NPOs is significant in addressing societal needs and promoting equity. Managing these organizations requires flexibility and adaptability to changing environments. Effective communication, fundraising through technology, and network-building to expand social impact are essential. NPOs must also ensure good governance and transparency in their operations to build trust among stakeholders. Furthermore, the efficient use of resources and the development of self-reliance capabilities will enable these organizations to operate sustainably in the long term. (Di Lauro, S., & Tursunbayeva, A. 2019, Samad, N. H. A., Hazlina, A. N., & Suria, K. 2023)

The Church of Christ in Thailand Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to fulfilling God's mission in Thai society. It comprises Protestant churches nationwide, divided into 24 districts. The Church Region 1 operates under the vision that "The First District Church is a strong church with steadfast leaders and servants who serve according to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ." The First District Church's mission includes strengthening local churches and pastoral districts to operate appropriately and efficiently, promoting religious leaders to play a vital role in spreading the Gospel, and managing churches according to the Great Commission to continue the Church's mission in the 21st century. The First District Church's operations involve strategic planning and development by its Planning and Development Committee to align with the policies of the Church of Christ in Thailand. The 102 local churches and 58 chapels under the First District's supervision are the Christian community's centers, responsible for spreading the Gospel, fostering spiritual growth, and improving members' quality of life. (Chairacha, A et al. 2025)

In recent years, local churches under the supervision of the Church of Christ in Thailand particularly those in region 1, which encompasses the upper northern area of the country have faced a range of structural and contextual challenges. These include cultural and ethnic diversity, economic disparities, and geographical limitations. One of the most critical issues directly affecting the operations of local churches is their organizational self-reliance in management. Most local churches lack a clear management system, strategic plans tailored to their local contexts, and capable personnel who can implement management based on the PDCA principle (Ontam, N., 2019), which includes Planning, Doing, Checking, and Acting. These processes play a vital role in strengthening administrative capacities and enhancing organizational self-sufficiency. However, due to these limitations, many churches continue to rely heavily on external resources, such as financial support from the Church of Christ in Thailand or international Christian organizations, rather than mobilizing internal resources. This situation negatively impacts the sustainability of their ministries and long-term operations, leading to consequences such as discontinuity in church development processes, lack of policy-related data or support, and erosion of trust among members (Executive Committee, The Church Region 1, The Church of Christ in Thailand, 2025). Key success factors include the application of Kotler's management principles (Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L. 2016), integration of Competency Management theory, and alignment with sustainable development goals (SDGs), which encompass social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Furthermore, the use of the CIPP Model (Stufflebeam, D. L., 2007) as a tool for developing appropriate administrative strategies plays a crucial role in enhancing the church's self-reliance. Establishing a clear mission and vision also contributes significantly to fostering shared understanding among members and promoting effective collaboration, thereby paving

the way for stable and sustainable self-reliance of local churches in the long term. (Chairacha, A et al. 2025, Iwu, C. G., Kapondoro, L., Twum-Darko, M., & Tengeh, R. 2015)

Given the challenges local churches have recently encountered ranging from structural limitations in administration, cultural diversity, and shifting economic contexts, to internal resource shortages these factors have significantly impacted the stability of their mission and the continuity of long-term operations. Consequently, it has become imperative

for local churches to strengthen their capacity for organizational self-reliance in management. This development is essential for adapting to changing contexts and reducing dependence on external resources. The recognition of this urgent need served as a key motivation for undertaking this study. This research is an extension of the study titled “Operational Development of the Planning and Development Department First District of The Church of Christ in Thailand” which was published in the Rajabhat Rambhai Barni Research Journal, Year 19 Volume 1. The primary objective is to examine the current state, expectations, and management approaches of local churches under the Church of Christ in Thailand, with a particular focus on region 1, located in the upper northern part of the country. The study aims to support churches in progressing toward stability and sustainability. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance their administrative self-reliance, enabling each church to develop in a manner that is appropriately aligned with its unique local context.

Objective

1. To examine the current state of local church management under the Church of Christ in Thailand.
2. To explore the expectations regarding the development of local church management toward self-reliance.
3. To analyze guidelines for local church management for achieving self-reliance.

Document Review

The study on “Guidelines for Local Church Management of the Church of Christ in Thailand for self-reliance in the Church Region 1, Upper Northern Thailand” requires the use of relevant theories and research as tools for analysis and investigation. Given that this study pertains to the application of quality management principles particularly the management cycle that promotes systematic operations and continuous improvement the researcher conducted a document review as follows:

3.1 Literature Review

The concept of the quality management cycle (PDCA), as proposed by Deming comprising the stages of Plan, Do, Check, and Act can be interpreted and applied within the dimensions of religion and the principle of self-reliance, particularly in the context of religious communities and lifestyles grounded in ethics and the pursuit of sustainable self-development. Specifically, the Plan stage reflects a process of reflection and discernment concerning one's spiritual state or communal beliefs, aiming to establish a course of transformation aligned with divine purpose or religious teachings. The Do stage involves putting these principles into practice in daily life or in service, beginning at the micro or local level to foster learning and adaptability. The Check stage entails self-assessment and communal evaluation based on ethical standards such as reviewing behaviors, beliefs, and their religious implications. The Act stage represents the conscious acceptance of change, guided by awareness and commitment to continual growth. (Ontam, N., 2019)

This cycle aligns closely with the principles of self-reliance, emphasizing experiential learning, recognition of individual and communal value and potential, and development rooted in truth, goodness, and beauty. Altogether, this suggests that Deming's PDCA cycle is not merely a managerial tool, but also a spiritual mechanism that can shape the process of individual and communal development, fostering growth that is stable, sustainable, and deeply grounded in religious and self-reliant frameworks. (Suksongkram, S. 2021)

3.2 Related Research

A review of relevant literature reveals that organizational management across various contexts reflects key factors influencing both effectiveness and sustainability. Renuman, C. (2022) found that educational resource management in academic institutions is performed at a high level. In contrast, Chumso, P. (2016) pointed out that the management of Sunday Buddhist education centers lacked systematic planning and evaluation. Prongdong, V. & Mahahing, P. (2021), as well as Charanthammo, T. & Panyadeepo, P. (2021), emphasized the importance of visionary leadership and effective management processes. Similarly, Wachiraphusit, M. (2020) and Chaiprakong, T. (2021) asserted that sound planning contributes to goal achievement and appropriate budget control.

Wakeman, E. & Duangnapa, I. (2013) found that churches with comprehensive management systems were able to carry out their missions effectively and foster strong member collaboration. Srijarumethiyan, C. & Watthano, T. (2018), along with Malai, T. & Kumjai, K. (2015), stressed the roles of leadership and member participation in community development.

Furthermore, Jitsing, T. & Phaiwithiyasiritham, C. (2022) found that churches with clear development approaches and strong community engagement practices showed improved self-reliance. Chairacha A. et al. (2025) found that the factor of monitoring and evaluation has a great impact on development, while planning, implementation, and improvement have a moderate effect. Chanseng, Y. & Wiwattananukul, M. (2018) emphasized the importance of communication, particularly through online platforms. Anthaveesin, A. (2014) advocated for the use of information technology to enhance organizational efficiency. In addition, scholars such as Sithikongtang, S. (2021), Jomhongpipat, P. et al. (2013), Meethaisong, T. (2021), Satsanguan, K. (2001), and Khonthong, W. et al (2010) highlighted the necessity of leadership development, income generation, personnel training, and the adaptability of religious communities as essential strategies for achieving sustainable self-reliance. Collectively, these studies underscore the crucial roles of planning, leadership, communication, participation, and technological integration in managing religious organizations to effectively fulfill their missions and maintain long-term stability.

3.3 Conceptual Framework

The research conceptual framework is outlined as follows:

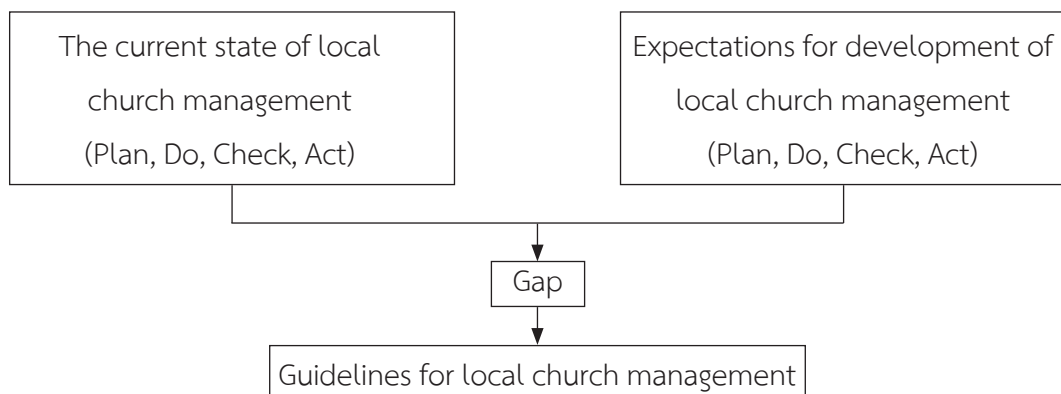


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Research

Research Methodology

4.1 Population and Sample

The population in this study comprised 16 members of the local church executive committee, 12 district presidents of the local church and 505 local church elders.

The sample was selected from the group of local church elders using Krejcie & Morgan's table (Srisaard, B., 2023). The sample size was determined based on a population proportion of 0.5, a margin of error of 5%, and a confidence level of 95%, resulting in a sample size of 224 people. Quota sampling was then applied, collecting data from 12 pastoral districts, with 19 respondents per district, totaling 228 respondents.

4.2 Research Instruments

The quantitative research instrument was a questionnaire developed in alignment with the research objectives. It was designed for local church elders (228) and comprised covering general information about the respondents and their respective churches, as well as both the status and expectations concerning local church management practices.

The qualitative research instrument was an in-depth interview guide, designed for interviewing the executive committee members (16) and the heads of pastoral districts of local churches (12) regarding church management and approaches to achieving self-reliant administration.

The instruments underwent content validity verification by three experts, achieving a content validity index of item objective congruence (IOC) of 0.93, indicating that the questions effectively measured the research objectives.

The questionnaire underwent a Reliability Analysis to test the consistency of the research results when the same method is applied repeatedly to the same sample group. This analysis was conducted to assess the reliability of the responses obtained from the participants by measuring Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The value of this coefficient ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values generally indicating greater reliability. A coefficient of 0.7 or higher is considered acceptable (Cronbach, L.J., 1951). In this study, the overall Cronbach's alpha was 0.915, indicating that the questionnaire demonstrated a very high level of reliability.

4.3 Data Collection

Data collection was divided into two types: (1) Primary data was obtained through questionnaires. Data was collected from the sample group direct distribution. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants using a structured interview format. The researcher prepared a set of questions in advance. (2) Secondary data was gathered through a review of relevant literature, including textbooks, documents, books, journals, publications, and prior research. These sources were used to support the study and enhance its credibility.

This research project received approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Payap University prior to data collection. The ethical review was certified on January 14, 2025, under the research project code PYU_REC No. 67/078, with the Certificate of Approval number COA No. 68/003.

4.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were coded and processed using statistical software, employing mean values and standard deviation. The results were interpreted based on the following mean score ranges (Srisaard, B., 2023):

Mean scores between 4.21 – 5.00: The highest

Mean scores between 3.41 – 4.20: High

Mean scores between 2.61 – 3.40: Moderate

Mean scores between 1.81 – 2.60: Low

Mean scores between 1.00 – 1.80: The lowest

Qualitative data from in-depth interviews were analyzed using inductive summarization and component analysis to synthesize comprehensive insights in line with the research objectives

Results

The results of the study are as follows:

Table 1 Presents the meaning and standard deviation of local church management

The local church management		Present			Expectancy		
		Mean	S.D.	Results	Mean	S.D.	Results
Plan							
1	Setting Clear Goals and Objectives for Developing Self-Reliance	3.33	0.68	Moderate	4.04	0.82	High
2	Short- and Long-Term Planning for Church Development	4.11	0.77	High	4.39	0.76	Highest
3	Planning for Resource Management and Effective Implementation	3.37	0.64	Moderate	4.09	0.73	High
4	Planning the Use of Media and Various Channels for Regular Information Dissemination of Church Activities	3.35	0.55	Moderate	4.11	0.64	High
5	Planning Public Relations and Effective Evangelism Strategies to Attract New Members	3.38	0.58	Moderate	4.08	0.91	High
Plan (Next)							
6	Planning the Annual Budget for Clear Spending Management	3.32	0.72	Moderate	4.47	0.60	Highest
7	Appropriate Planning Methods Aligned with the Context of Members and the Church	3.97	0.69	High	4.28	0.66	Highest
8	Surveying Community Needs Before Conducting Church Ministry	3.51	0.88	High	4.26	0.98	Highest

Table 1 Presents the meaning and standard deviation of local church management (continued)

The local church management		Present			Expectancy		
		Mean	S.D.	Results	Mean	S.D.	Results
9	Member Participation in Defining the Church's Vision and Mission	2.90	0.62	Moderate	4.38	0.89	Highest
10	Member Involvement in Church Financial Planning and Management	2.87	0.63	Moderate	4.15	0.98	High
11	The Church Committee Has Clear Plans to Establish Systems that Support Church Self-Reliance	3.39	0.87	Moderate	4.14	0.86	High
12	Resource Planning and Church Budget Management are Effective and Meet Community Needs	3.32	0.86	Moderate	4.12	0.92	High
13	The Church Committee Plans for Church Development and Promotes Members' Self-Reliance Skills	3.30	0.82	Moderate	4.18	0.78	High
Average		3.39	0.72	Moderate	4.21	0.81	Highest
Do							
1	The Church Implements the Planned Activities	4.18	0.85	High	4.25	0.83	Highest
2	Defining Clear Roles and Responsibilities for Members in Various Ministries	4.47	0.70	Highest	4.47	0.70	Highest
3	Member Participation in Collaborative Work According to the Plan	4.29	0.72	Highest	4.29	0.72	Highest

Table 1 Presents the meaning and standard deviation of local church management (continued)

The local church management		Present			Expectancy		
		Mean	S.D.	Results	Mean	S.D.	Results
4	Operational Methods Align with the Church's Context	3.48	0.72	High	4.53	0.72	Highest
5	Religious Leaders Provide Well-Prepared Teachings that Inspire Members	4.16	0.87	High	4.68	0.49	Highest
6	Religious Leaders Serve as Good Role Models for Members and the Community	4.14	0.85	High	4.34	0.75	Highest
7	Church Teachings and Activities are Diverse and Engaging for Members	4.12	0.85	High	4.32	0.77	Highest
8	Organizing Activities that Attract and Meet the Needs of Members and the Community	4.03	0.73	High	4.36	0.64	Highest
9	Appropriate Responses to the Needs of New Believers	4.15	0.84	High	4.21	0.82	Highest
10	Members Regularly Share Their Faith and Personal Experiences with Others	3.17	0.39	Moderate	4.05	0.92	High
11	Supporting Members in Their Faith Growth and Personal Development	4.02	0.83	High	4.56	0.64	Highest
12	Building Relationships with Members to Encourage Their Support in Church Activities	3.89	0.62	High	4.30	0.80	Highest

Table 1 Presents the meaning and standard deviation of local church management (continued)

The local church management		Present			Expectancy		
		Mean	S.D.	Results	Mean	S.D.	Results
Do (Next)							
13	Clear and Systematic Internal Communication within the Church	4.02	0.59	High	4.24	0.59	Highest
14	Using Diverse Media and Communication Channels to Raise Awareness and Ensure Accessibility	3.32	0.82	Moderate	4.02	0.92	High
15	Effective Church Fund Management	3.39	0.81	Moderate	4.47	0.56	Highest
16	The Church Has Diverse Revenue Sources to Support Operations	2.59	0.65	Low	4.27	0.85	Highest
17	The Church Provides Financial Reports for Members' Awareness	3.39	0.63	Moderate	4.23	0.56	Highest
18	The Church Has Adequate Resources and Uses Them Efficiently	3.82	0.76	High	4.59	0.58	Highest
19	Church Facilities Are Well-Maintained and Appropriate for Ministry Activities	3.87	0.77	High	4.43	0.68	Highest
20	Operations Clearly Promote Knowledge and Skills Essential for Member Self-Reliance	2.56	0.79	Low	4.07	0.90	High

Table 1 Presents the meaning and standard deviation of local church management (continued)

The local church management		Present			Expectancy		
		Mean	S.D.	Results	Mean	S.D.	Results
21	The Church Committee Efficiently Manages Internal Church Resources	3.36	0.49	Moderate	4.11	0.78	High
22	Roles and Responsibilities Are Clearly Defined to Support Church Self-Reliance	3.24	0.58	Moderate	4.16	0.80	High
Average		3.69	0.72	High	4.31	0.73	Highest
Check							
1	Evaluation of Operations According to the Plan	2.76	0.67	Moderate	3.82	0.97	High
2	Regular Monitoring and Assessment of Member Satisfaction	2.79	0.63	Moderate	3.96	0.83	High
3	Consistent Monitoring and Evaluation of Budget Spending	2.77	0.42	Moderate	4.48	0.82	Highest
4	Regular Assessment of Progress Toward Achieving Goals and Objectives	2.68	0.47	Moderate	3.83	0.83	High
5	Opportunities for Members to Share Feedback on Church Operations	3.85	0.94	High	4.28	0.78	Highest
6	Regular Reporting to the First District Church	3.11	0.65	Moderate	3.91	0.91	Highest
7	The Church Committee Regularly Monitors Operations to Ensure Goal Achievement	3.61	0.91	High	4.33	0.50	Highest

Table 1 Presents the meaning and standard deviation of local church management (continued)

The local church management		Present			Expectancy		
		Mean	S.D.	Results	Mean	S.D.	Results
8	Church Resource and Budget Management Are Transparent and Fair	3.71	0.99	High	4.30	0.64	Highest
9	A Clear System for Receiving Feedback and Suggestions from Church Members to Improve Operations	3.34	0.82	Moderate	4.14	0.84	High
Average		3.15	0.71	Moderate	4.11	0.79	High
Act							
1	Using Evaluation Results to Improve Operations	2.63	0.69	Moderate	4.07	0.70	High
Act (Next)							
2	Adjusting Ministry Goals and Objectives in Response to Social Changes and Member Needs	2.68	0.64	Moderate	4.17	0.72	High
3	Listening to Members' Opinions on Church Operations	3.63	0.79	High	4.44	0.63	Highest
4	Supporting Members' Faith Growth and Personal Development	4.23	0.75	Highest	4.29	0.75	Highest
5	Members Feel a Sense of Belonging and Are Willing to Support Each Other	4.21	0.72	Highest	4.56	0.52	Highest
6	Transparent and Auditable Financial Management	3.55	0.77	High	4.33	0.75	Highest

Table 1 Presents the meaning and standard deviation of local church management (continued)

The local church management		Present			Expectancy		
		Mean	S.D.	Results	Mean	S.D.	Results
7	Boosting Morale and Encouraging Member Participation in Church Ministry	4.22	0.79	Highest	4.62	0.55	Highest
8	The Church Has Self-Development Strategies to Establish Sustainable Self-Reliance	2.89	0.61	Moderate	4.07	0.80	High
9	Organizing Regular Training to Develop Members' Skills	2.88	0.63	Moderate	4.08	0.61	High
10	Member Participation in Using Evaluation Results for Future Planning	2.75	0.60	Moderate	4.09	0.84	High
11	The Church Committee Effectively Resolves Emerging Issues	3.64	0.58	High	4.25	0.87	Highest
12	Problem-Solving Within the Church Aligns with Ministry Objectives and Christian Teachings	3.42	0.63	High	4.56	0.57	Highest
Average		3.39	0.68	Moderate	4.27	0.69	Highest
Total Average		3.47	0.71	High	4.29	0.70	Highest

From Table 1, it was found that respondents rated the current management efficiency of local churches at a high level (Mean = 3.47, S.D. = 0.71), indicating extensive application of the PDCA system. When analyzed by aspect, current performance was rated high in implementation (Mean = 3.69, S.D. = 0.72) and moderate in planning (Mean = 3.39, S.D. = 0.72), improvement (Mean = 3.39, S.D. = 0.68), and evaluation (Mean = 3.15, S.D. = 0.71).

Respondents' expectations regarding future management efficiency of local churches were at the highest level overall (Mean = 4.29, S.D. = 0.70). By aspect, expectations were highest for implementation (Mean = 4.31, S.D. = 0.73), improvement (Mean = 4.27, S.D. = 0.69) and planning (Mean = 4.21, S.D. = 0.81) with high expectations in evaluation (Mean = 4.11, S.D. = 0.79).

Interviews with church committee members and district presidents revealed that local church management toward self-reliance continues to face various challenges, especially in financial management and leadership development. Despite efforts in planning management, the absence of a structured and efficient system remains a significant barrier. Implementing the PDCA cycle comprehensively can provide a clearer direction for local churches to achieve sustainable self-reliance.

From this study, the research findings can be analyzed through the PDCA process to establish the following management guidelines.

1. Planning: The church committees and the district presidents recognize the importance of self-reliance but lack of strategic plans. While some regions have set goals, actionable long-term strategies are still missing.

2. Implementation: Although local churches have made efforts to develop local leaders, systematic and continuous training is still lacking. Additionally, operational resources remain heavily dependent on central support, limiting operational flexibility.

3. Evaluation: Monitoring and assessment systems are not well-structured, making it difficult to measure the success of local church development. The local churches should have tools that facilitate evaluation and track progress toward self-reliance should be introduced.

4. Improvement: The local churches need mechanisms and policies that actively support self-reliance. Developing a comprehensive leadership training system and establishing cooperative networks among local churches can enhance the sharing of resources and best practices, ultimately promoting self-reliance.

Regarding expectations for improving local church management toward self-reliance, the church committees and the district presidents recommended prioritizing leadership development at the local level, developing an effective management system, and increasing member participation. Efforts should focus on enhancing financial

capacity through income-generating projects and systematic resource management. Additionally, clear strategies for social missions that positively impact surrounding communities should be emphasized.

Analysis of local church management guidelines reveals a shift toward adapting to changing social and economic contexts. Many local churches are placing greater emphasis on human resource development and strategic planning for long-term sustainability. Increasingly, local churches are leveraging technology and online platforms to spread the Gospel and boost member engagement.

Overall, the PDCA cycle analysis indicates that local churches are adapting to social and economic changes by incorporating strategic planning aligned with sustainable development goals (SDGs) that address social, economic, and environmental dimensions. However, there remain gaps in implementing plans systematically and effectively. The evaluation phase lacks robust mechanisms for tracking progress and identifying challenges. Moreover, the improvement phase does not yet adequately address developing personnel capacity in technology use and strategic management skills, which are crucial for enhancing self-reliance and improving the operational efficiency of local churches in the long term.

Significant obstacles to achieving self-reliance for local churches include unstable budgets, a shortage of managerial personnel, and the absence of a structured competency development plan. This has led to challenges in building cooperation between churches and their communities. Proposed solutions include enhancing local churches leadership training, developing sustainable income sources, and improving management structures for increased efficiency.

Conclusion and Discussion

Conclusion

This study concluded that the current management efficiency of local churches is rated high overall, with expectations for development at the highest level. Achieving self-reliance in local church management requires human resource development, effective financial management, and adaptation to evolving social contexts to ensure the church's long-term stability and sustainability.

Discussion of Research Findings

1. Current State of Local Church Management under the Church of Christ in Thailand

Overall, the current management efficiency of local churches was found to be at a high level. Analyzed by aspect, performance was rated high in implementation and improvement; while planning and evaluation were rated at a moderate level. This aligns with the findings of Renuman, C. (2022), who reported that educational resource management in schools under the Phitsanulok Primary Educational Service Area Office 3, Chumso, P. (2016) found that the management of Sunday Buddhist Study Centers was rated at a moderate level, excelling in implementation but requiring improvements in planning and evaluation for long-term effectiveness, Prongdong, V. & Mahahing, P. (2021) emphasized that Buddhist organization management in modern educational institutions requires leaders with long-term vision who focus on comprehensive and strategic planning to ensure sustainability and organizational development, and Charanthammo, T. & Panyadeepo, P. (2021) also highlighted that effective management processes are crucial for successful organizational operations.

The current management of local churches still relies support on The Church of Christ in Thailand in terms of budget, personnel, and operational guidelines. However, local churches lack efficient mechanisms for achieving self-reliance, particularly in financial management and local churches leadership development. This finding is consistent with the research of Sithikhongtang, S. (2021), which indicated that the lack of capable leadership and sustainable development plans are significant factors requiring ongoing support from center organizations.

2. Expectations for Improving Local Church Management under the Church of Christ in Thailand Toward Self-Reliance

Local churches have expectations at high level for improving management in planning, implementation and improvement, with substantial expectations for evaluation as well. Effective planning is particularly emphasized, aligning with the recommendations of Jirawongso, J. (2020), who identified efficient planning as a key factor in achieving organizational goals and effective activity management. Including, Chairacha A. et al. (2025) found that the factor of monitoring and evaluation has a great impact on development,

while planning, implementation, and improvement have a moderate effect, Chaiprakong, T. (2021) emphasized that proper budget planning aids in evaluation and operational control. Wakeman, E. & Duangnapa, I. (2018) further stated that churches capable of fulfilling their core missions effectively reflect high expectations in implementation and improvement, particularly in visionary leadership and fostering member collaboration.

The expectation in developing local church management toward self-reliance, emphasis should be placed on developing local church leadership, establishing effective management systems, and encouraging greater member participation. Strengthening financial capabilities through income-generating projects and systematic resource management is critical. Furthermore, clear strategies for social missions that positively impact surrounding communities should be emphasized. This aligns with the research of Srijarumethiyan, C. & Watthano, T. (2018), who highlighted the role of leaders in inspiring and guiding community development efforts. Malai, T. and Kumjai, K. (2015) also emphasized that member participation is vital to the success of community business initiatives. Moreover, Jitsing, T. & Phaiwithiyasiritham, C. (2022) found that churches with clear social mission strategies and active community engagement were more capable of achieving self-reliance. Chanseng, Y. & Wiwattananukul, M. (2018) also found that Thai Christians expected pastors to utilize various communication channels, particularly online platforms, to convey the Word of God and inspire spiritual growth. Additionally, Anthaveesin, A. (2014) advocated for the integration of information and communication technology to enhance organizational management, skill development and competitive opportunities.

3. The gap between the current and expected management

The causes contributing to the gap between the current and expected management practices of local churches reveal that this disparity arises from multiple factors, including structural, systemic, and personnel-related issues. (1) The critical factor is the centralized administrative structure, which limits flexibility and inhibits autonomous decision-making. (2) The absence of mechanisms and tools for self-reliance, particularly in areas such as financial management and the development of local leadership hinders the effective utilization of resources. (3) There exists a skills gap among local leaders, who have not been adequately developed in areas such as planning, administration, and evaluation.

(4) Member participation remains limited, reducing the sense of ownership and diminishing the collective energy required to advance the church's mission. Lastly, the lack of a clear strategy for social mission development prevents local churches from generating the anticipated positive impact on their surrounding communities.

4. Guidelines for Local Church Management Toward Self-Reliance

Local churches still require The Church of Christ in Thailand support in various areas, including budget, personnel, and operational guidance. However, efficient mechanisms for achieving self-reliance remain underdeveloped, particularly in financial management and leadership development. This aligns with the research of Sithikongtang, S. (2021), which identified the lack of capable leadership and sustainable development plans as key obstacles to church self-reliance.

An effective guideline for developing local church management is to adapt to changing social and economic contexts. Many churches are placing greater emphasis on human resource development and strategic planning to achieve long-term sustainability. Additionally, technology and online platforms are increasingly used to spread the Gospel and engage members. This is consistent with the research of Jomhongpipat, P. et al (2013) who highlighted the importance of local churches leadership training and improved organizational structures in enhancing operational efficiency and fostering sustainable community collaboration. Meethaisong, T. (2021) also emphasized that Christian communities have adapted across various dimensions to maintain and promote church missions amid social changes.

Key challenges to achieving self-reliance for local churches include unstable budgets, a shortage of personnel with management expertise, and difficulties in building cooperative networks between churches and their communities. Suggested solutions include enhancing local churches leadership training, developing sustainable income sources, and improving management structures for increased efficiency. This aligns with the research of Satsanguan, K. (2001), which identified budget constraints as a major factor limiting organizational continuity, and Khonthong, W. et al (2010), who emphasized the importance of stable revenue sources and personnel development to promote sustainable self-reliance.

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Suggestion

Key recommendations include:

1. Improving Planning: Local churches should emphasize systematic planning by designing clear, comprehensive processes that address social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Plans should be aligned with contextual assessments and appropriate resource allocation to effectively address future challenges and changes.

2. Strengthening Evaluation Processes: Local churches should develop well-structured evaluation systems that employ precise tools to assess performance across all dimensions. This will enable tracking of progress and continuous improvement aligned with established goals.

3. Enhancing Operational Processes: Emphasis should be placed on continuously improving work processes using data from evaluations as the foundation for refinement. This will enhance responsiveness to members and community expectations.

4. Developing Sustainable Self-Reliance: Local churches should establish management frameworks that focus on targeted personnel development, enhancing technology capabilities, and strengthening strategic management skills. Concurrently, promoting income-generating initiatives, internal resource development, and encouraging community participation will enable local churches to achieve sustainable self-reliance and long-term operational stability.

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