

Representing the Gospel in Mental Wellness

Where: Seoul, Korea

When: Wednesday, 29 October 2025

1. Executive Summary / Abstract

This report synthesises the critical insights from a panel discussion on mental wellness at the WEA General Assembly, enriched and validated by direct feedback from session attendees. The presentation identified the global mental health crisis not as a root cause of societal ills, but as a symptom of a deeper, more pervasive issue: an epidemic of superficiality, hurry, and the loss of authentic community.

The core message emerging from this combined dialogue is a compelling call for leaders to move beyond superficial fixes and reclaim the foundational truths of the gospel for their own well-being and that of their communities. The solution presented is not another programme or productivity hack, but a return to simplicity and depth. This involves three key shifts:

1. **Embracing *Imago Dei*:** Recognising our identity as unique image-bearers of God, whose value is inherent and not based on performance.
2. **Cultivating *Koinonia*:** Building deep, unhurried community as the primary strategy for discipleship and mission.
3. **Adopting Jesus's Rhythms:** Intentionally incorporating presence, soulful connection, and rest into our lives.

The report details the theological underpinnings of this approach and explores its practical application in diverse contexts, presenting a unified vision for a Church that leads from a wellspring of soulful presence and genuine connection.

2. Detailed and Clear Summary of the Key Content

The plenary session, "Representing the Gospel in Mental Wellness," opened with a stark diagnosis of the current cultural moment. Dr Sam Kim framed mental health not merely as an individual struggle but as a crisis symptomatic of a deeper malady: the modern epidemic of **superficiality** coupled with a profound **loss of community**. He powerfully argued that while we are the most technologically connected generation in history, we are also the most polarised, disconnected, and lonely.

This analysis was immediately and poignantly confirmed by the lived experiences shared in the attendee feedback sessions.

- One leader confessed to a habit of filling every spare moment, even a ten-minute walk, with podcasts, a seemingly productive behaviour that he later recognised as a **barrier to being present** with God and his own reality. This perfectly illustrates the macro-level diagnosis that the 'hurry' erodes our capacity for deep connection.
- A pastor provided a compelling case study, describing how his exhaustion and imbalance resulted from being a "busy person" who took on too many responsibilities. His crucial insight was that this was not a sign of dedication but a **"bad leadership strategy"** rooted in

a desire for control. This gives a practical face to the panel's assertion that the cultural worship of productivity costs us our relationships and our souls.

The pressure to perform, to be constantly "becoming someone," leaves no room for the peace of simply "**being someone to be loved.**"

Having diagnosed the problem, the panel pivoted to the gospel's profound and simple solution.

Dr Kim asserted that the cure is *Koinonia*, deep, relational fellowship, and noted that Jesus was never in a hurry; his primary mission strategy was deliberate, unhurried time spent with people. The greatest call on the Church today, therefore, is not for greater productivity but for greater **presence**.

Dr Kymberli Cook grounded the discussion in the theological bedrock of the *Imago Dei* (the image of God). She argued that the digital space risks flattening our perception of ourselves and others, reducing rich human souls to "curated fragments." The antidote is to reclaim the truth that every person possesses an inviolable dignity. This directly confronts the core anxiety noted by panellist Charis Chow: the internalised idea that "**what we are is what we produce.**" Dr Cook urged attendees to utilise assessment tools, not as mere self-help, but as an "**act of worship and stewardship**" to understand their unique divine wiring.

The panellists demonstrated how these principles apply across diverse ministry fields:

Panellist	Contextual Challenge	Gospel Application
Andrew Feng	Diaspora students facing immense performance pressure and "digital displacement."	The Church must become a true family, moving students from chasing being "well-known" to the profound healing of being "known well."
Bernie Mapili	The vast, often unseen, world of online gaming (3 billion users).	Challenged the Church's absence, demonstrating that authentic Christian community, a " delicious gamer sandwich ", can be created in digital spaces.
Charis Chow	Gen Z craving "soulful presence," not more solutions.	Her ministry exemplifies that the most counter-cultural act the Church can perform is to slow down and truly see one another by simply asking, "What is your story?"

The attendee feedback further echoed these solutions. A pastor who resolved to build and trust his team is putting into practice the move from performance to presence. Another leader who struggles with, yet repeatedly returns to, the discipline of **Sabbath** is living out the difficult but essential work of adopting Jesus's unhurried rhythms.

This rich conversation naturally gives rise to practical and challenging questions for leaders seeking to apply these principles:

- How can we cultivate a culture of Sabbath and rest in ministries where weekend work is the norm and the demands feel relentless?
- In cultures that highly value productivity and tangible results, how can leaders justify and protect "**unstructured time**" as a core ministry strategy?
- What practical steps can a leader take to shift from a "doing" to a "being" paradigm, especially when facing pressure for growth and measurable outcomes?

3. Main Topic and Core Message

Category	Summary
Main Topic	A comprehensive examination of the modern mental health crisis through a gospel lens, identifying the root causes in the cultural idols of hurry, productivity, and superficiality, and presenting a biblically grounded path toward healing and resilience.
Core Message	The Church's most powerful response to the mental health crisis is to offer a counter-cultural alternative rooted in the gospel. True mental wellness flows from embracing our inherent value as God's image-bearers, rejecting the tyranny of hurry, and cultivating deep, authentic <i>Koinonia</i> .

4. Primary Arguments, Key Principles, and Theological Points

- The global mental health crisis is a symptom of a deeper spiritual problem: an epidemic of superficiality and the erosion of genuine community.
- The culture of hurry, driven by a worship of productivity, is fundamentally toxic to our souls and relationships.
- The pervasive pressure to perform and produce, prevalent even in Christian circles, replaces the peace of "being" with the anxiety of perpetual "doing."
- **Presence Over Productivity:** The most valuable gift leaders can offer is their unhurried, fully present attention.
- **Community as Strategy:** The primary method for fostering mental and spiritual health is the cultivation of authentic *Koinonia*.
- **Resilience Through Rhythm:** Sustainable ministry requires the intentional practice of life-giving rhythms, especially the discipline of Sabbath rest.
- **Imago Dei (The Image of God):** Our value is irrevocably grounded in our status as unique bearers of God's image, not in our accomplishments.
- **Koinonia (Fellowship):** Deep, Christ-centred community is the God-ordained context for healing, discipleship, and witness in a fractured world.
- **The Example of Christ:** Jesus's earthly ministry provides the ultimate model for an unhurried, relational, and present-focused life.

5. Conclusion and Call to Action

The powerful synergy between the panel's insights and the attendees' affirming experiences delivers an unequivocal conclusion: we must courageously embrace the counter-cultural, life-giving rhythms of the gospel.

The call to action is not to add another item to our already over-filled to-do lists, but to engage in a fundamental re-evaluation of our way of life and leadership.

1. **Lead from Being:** Intentionally carve out space to simply *be* with God and your community. Ask "**What is your story?**" before asking "What can you do?"
2. **Embrace the Unhurried Way of Jesus:** Fearlessly schedule rest, practice Sabbath, and protect unstructured time. Model a life that demonstrates that our work depends on God, not the other way around.
3. **See the *Imago Dei* Everywhere:** Actively look for and affirm the unique, God-given giftedness in every person you encounter, reminding them that they are fully loved, not projects to be perfected.

Invitation for Further Engagement

Your voice is a vital part of this global conversation. We invite you to add your reflections, insights, and questions to this discussion by visiting the following link: <https://weafeedback.com/wednesday-29/>

1. Scroll down to the Panel session titles,
2. When ready, select 'Start Recording' and provide your input (responding to the questions below.
3. When done, select 'Stop'
4. No need to provide personal details
5. When ready, select 'Send'.

To engage with the report and contextualise the content for your ministry, access Spock.chat (if you have not yet registered, click here - <https://app.spock.chat/conference/wea>) It is highly recommended that you personalise your AI before engaging with the reports. To do so, select the 'Personalise your AI' agent in the Menu Bar and follow the instructions.