



GARDENA VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH



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SIMPLIFY

BY DOUG BROWN, SENIOR PASTOR

sim·pli·fy verb

1. make (something) simpler or easier to do or understand.

"an overhaul of court procedure to simplify litigation"

synonyms: make simple/simpler, make easy/easier to understand,

make plainer, clarify, make more comprehensible/intelligible;

paraphrase "please simplify your answer"

A relative, who claimed to be a minimalist, pulled up to our house in an RV packed with his stuff. The trailer with the two BMW motorcycles and all the accompanying paraphernalia he left at home. Apparently, the goal to be a minimalist had not yet been achieved. Life was still more complex than simple. The multiplication of all our hand-held devices has not simplified our lives. In our age of increasing technological sophistication complexity seems to sell better. But this article is not about "stuff", it's about our future focus and how we will achieve it. I will be using the word "simplify" to encapsulate what I mean. "Simplify" not meaning simplistic, but simple. Uncomplicated.

Tom Rainer and Eric Geiger in their book Simple Church (2006), encourage churches to unclutter as so many are doing church instead of being the church. A straightforward and strategic process moves people forward with their God given mission can look like this:



If we are clear about the process (clarity) and committed to executing it then the process flows forward (movement) and is implemented in each area of the church (alignment) causing the church to abandon everything that is not in the process (focus). As we reflect on our commitments in 2019 we can use this model to help us accomplish our mission statement:

*"But seek first
the kingdom of God
and his righteousness
and all these things
will be added to you."*

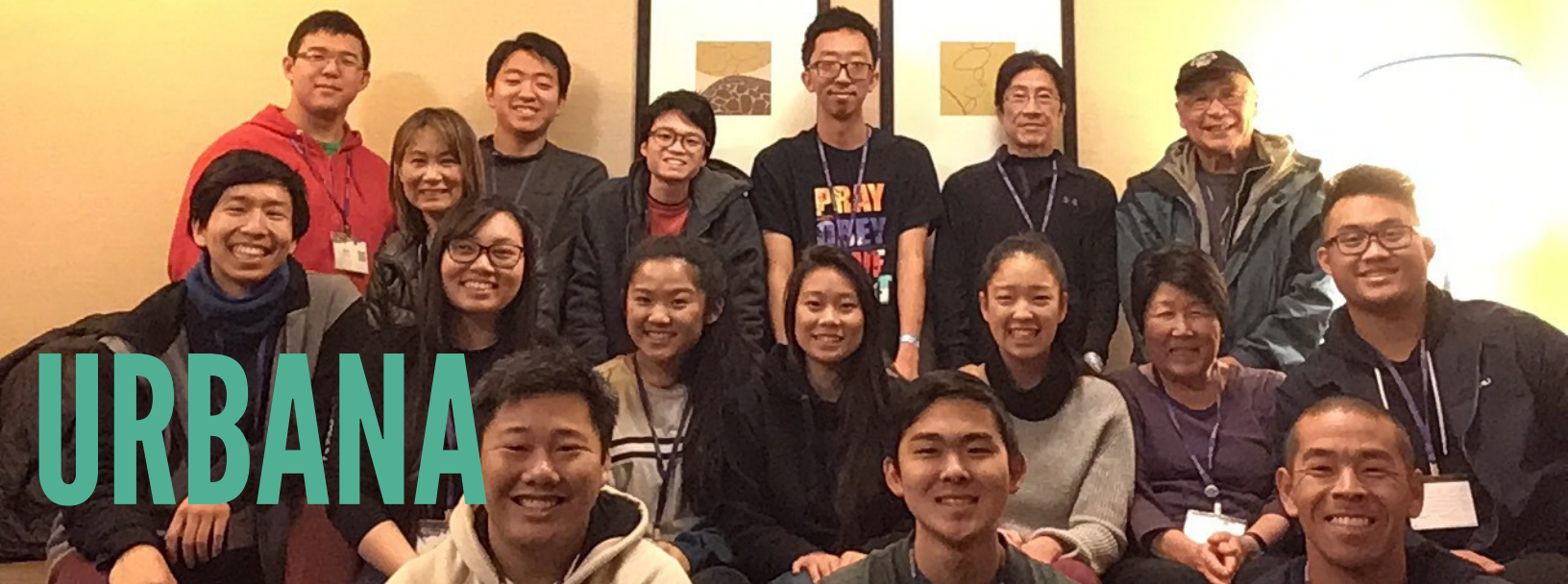
Matthew 6:33

"Helping people discover Jesus and become his fully devoted followers."

The design or redesign of our ministry will require an application of the four above elements. Clarity and simplicity go hand in hand. A process that has clarity is clearly defined so that we will know exactly what changes we need to make in our structure that will produce disciples. Movement is about flow. Movement is the sequential steps in the process that cause people to move to greater areas of commitment. Like a relay race, the most important of the race is the handoffs. Moving people from being an observer to a participant involves handoffs which we must pay attention to. This is followed by alignment which arranges all the ministries around the same simple process. Each person and ministry must come under the same overarching process. We must address ways we have drifted from accomplishing our mission statement and join with others in carrying out God's purposes for us. This requires focus which is the commitment to abandon everything that falls outside the simple ministry process. This means often saying "no" which does not make one popular. But this is critical to establish focus because focus is the element that gives power and energy to clarity, movement, and alignment.

Jesus' life and His words challenge us, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33) Jesus' focus was singular and He asks us to follow suit. His focus was to do the will of His Father which was to bring people into a saving relationship with God. Even as Jesus' focus was on the mission His Father gave Him, so our focus must be on the mission God has given us. This focus should be reflected in our church calendar, budget and ministry emphases. The parable of the talents has the master (Jesus) ask his servants (us) what they have done with what has been given to them. Jesus has given GVBC much, what are we doing with what He has given us?

Partnering with you in God's mission,
Pastor Doug



by Teresa Matsushima, Missions Committee

Every three years, GVBC sends a team of college students to the Urbana Missions conference in St. Louis, MO. This year's theme was "Faithful Witness" and was held from December 27, 2018 to January 1, 2019. Twelve GVBC college students attended along with GVBC's college director, Brad Toy, with Bob and Teresa Matsushima as chaperones, and Dr. Barry and Jodell Kadowaki also came alongside the team. The conference included morning inductive bible study, morning and evening speakers, challenging afternoon seminars, an exhibition hall with over 200 mission's exhibitors, a book store loaded with inspirational mission related books, and daily conference debriefings.

Danielle Ashimine

God taught me that I shouldn't be embarrassed to spread the gospel. He encouraged me through the faith of thousands of brothers and sisters at the conference. As of right now, God is pressing missions work for me at home in my community. I'm praying for the courage to spread God's truth to my friends and peers.

Lauren Cheng:

God taught me that I am part of His storyline and He can use me in any stage of life. I also learned that the book of Revelation is an encouragement to us as believers to endure as faithful witnesses and stay faithful because it is worth it. After attending the Urbana conference, God reaffirmed His calling for me to go on short term missions. For the first time in my life, I felt that this calling of missions was attainable and I look forward to the short term missions that our church has to offer!

Brandon Hirano:

During my time here at Urbana, I was expecting God to give me some sort of sign on where he wants me in his global mission plan. But instead, God taught me how another's calling might not be my calling. We heard many testimonies about how they listened to God, went someplace far away, and followed God's will. But one testimony stood out the most. The speaker described how her heart was for her fellow college soccer teammates. To me, this was practical, simple and easy. This has inspired me to reach out to my friends at El Camino College and make missions where I already am.

Chris Ishimatsu: I was slightly getting back to God and through the Bible study, worship & everyone's passion it has made me want to live my life as a testimony. The mission trip that stuck out to me was setting up filters that the people of that land can use to get clean water. I drink mostly water through out the day so I can't imagine not being able to drink clean water. Also the filtered water taste pretty good.

Jodell Kadowaki:

At Urbana I was exposed to and inspired by so many people and organizations committed to making a difference for God's Kingdom. I was reminded that my life is not about my own wants and ambitions, but about really making God's plans my priority.

I have a heartfelt desire to surrender and act out His will. I'm not sure what that looks like in the future, but I am open to His calling and direction.

Julie Shiota:

God has taught me how urgent and important the call to spread the gospel is. He has put on my heart to consider short and long term missions. Although I don't have a specific place in mind, I'll be praying for discernment of His will for missions in my life.

Aaron Kuratani:

God taught me about the many opportunities where we live that are missions fields like Hollywood/media culture and website/online areas and I never thought of these missions that were brought up. I don't think God is calling me away from missions. However, many opportunities I've never thought of before and people God has already put on my heart come to mind.

Bob Matsushima:

God taught me how much he loves the world. This was always His plan. I am praying if I should join the mission ministry.

"The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation."

Psalms 118:14

AN ALWAYS FAITHFUL GOD

PROFILE OF JEAN KOHAMA

BY KATHY AISO

"Being equally yoked in marriage is very important."--Jean Kohama

God used the dissolution of two marriages to bring Jean Kohama closer to Him. Both marriages were to non-Christians. The first marriage ended in divorce, while in the second marriage, the couple parted ways. "It didn't cross my mind to marry a Christian. Today, it would matter to me," Jean shared. With remorse about the status of both marriages, Jean sought the LORD for help. In the 1980's, Jean attended Hope Chapel and received solid marriage counseling. Dave Yamaguchi and Mike Higa ministered to Jean through their wise counsel and Bible Study. Jean's guilt issues about her ended marriages were resolved as Dave and Mike reminded her of God's love and forgiveness. This led Jean to pray with them to the Lord for forgiveness and healing.

THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS HER

Jean began to persevere in the Lord, by reading the Bible and praying daily. As Jean began healing, she felt more and more of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Once shy about sharing her faith, the Holy Spirit empowered Jean to speak and witness about the LORD to everyone. Jean actively shares her faith, even with strangers, to this day.

In 1999, Jean returned to GVBC, where she received the LORD as a teen. She immersed herself in ministry by joining the Evangelism Ministry and in time, Violet Dresser's community group. In addition to those ministries, Jean today helps with the child care for "Mommy and Me" and the nursery on Sunday. She is also a coffee hostess the 5th Sunday of the month.

A FAITHFUL VOLUNTEER IN THE COMMUNITY

With a giving heart, Jean desires to give back to her community. She volunteers for the Gardena Valley Pioneer Project and on Mondays through Thursdays, for the Japanese Cultural Institute. "It gives me a good feeling to volunteer and help the community and seniors," Jean shared. As the third of four children of Kay and Alice Kikawa, Jean grew up in Gardena. Jean's parents sent their children to GVBC, beginning when Jean was five. She grew up regularly attending church, until junior high and high school, when she started helping with the family grocery store. The store, Garfield Market, was located in Alhambra and also owned by two other families. "It was a blessing working for my parents," Jean recalled.

GOING FORWARD AT A BILLY GRAHAM CRUSADE

While in the youth group, Jean, along with her brother, Ross accepted the LORD. At age 15, Jean, along with Ross professed their faith in public by going forward at a Billy Graham Crusade. Jean went to work full time in the grocery/supermarket business. She enjoyed the grocery business and worked for different stores and supermarkets, until her retirement from Von's Pavillion in 2013. "I can work any department in a grocery store," Jean acknowledged. God has blessed Jean with a son, Scott; daughters, Kristine and Kari; a daughter-in-law, a son-in-law; and two grandchildren.

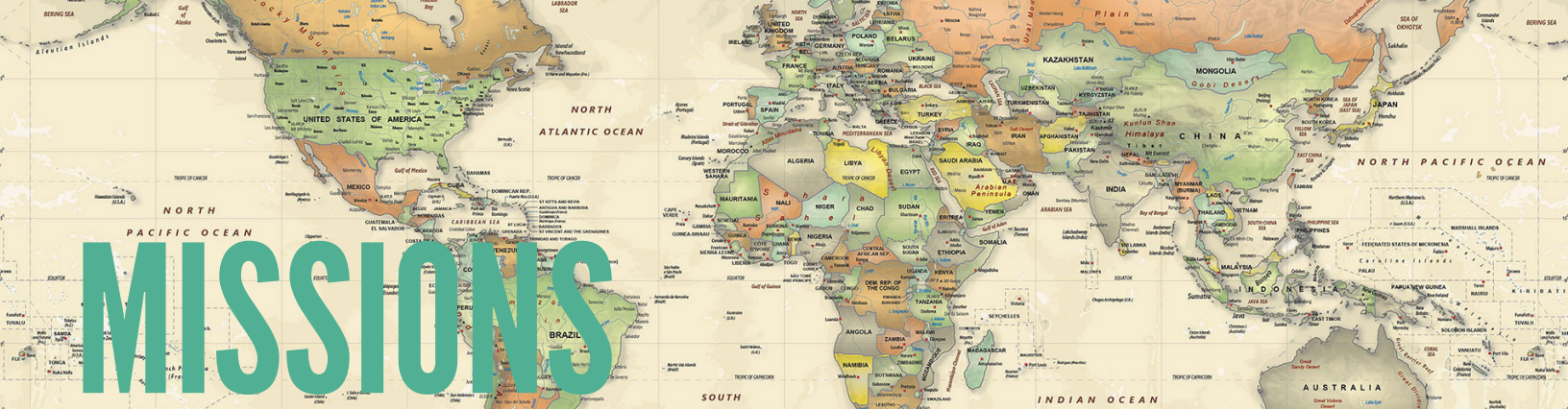
MADE A COMMITMENT TO THE LORD

Following retirement, Jean made a commitment to become even more devoted to God. She began spending more time in the Word and prayer. She also joined Violet Dresser's community group. Jean enjoys the fellowship of the other women and also Bible Study, as they meet on Friday evenings. In Jean's spare time, she enjoys bowling, having started as a teen in junior high school. During the weekdays, Jean participates in three bowling leagues.

GOD GIVES HER STRENGTH EACH DAY

One of Jean's favorite Bible verses, Psalm 118:14 reminds her that God gives her strength throughout each and everyday. She is also reminded of Jesus dying on the cross for us. "The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation." Jean greets strangers and those she knows, always with a personal blessing, "God bless you!" she beams, bringing God into the forefront of all her interactions with others. Jean considers her greeting a personal ministry to affirm others in the Lord with a blessing. Knowing the difference the Lord has made in her own life, Jean wholeheartedly wants to help lead others to Christ.





James Choung/InterVarsity

James felt like it was like a homecoming, returning to Catalina Island to minister with San Diego InterVarsity (SDIV). His entire family joined James in the festivities. 130 students and 40 staff from all over San Diego County showed up. James had been a part of SDIV for seven years, until he was appointed to be part of senior IV staff, so it felt as though he was "coming home". Taking the SDIV crew's advice, James spoke on "removing barriers" to students receiving the Gospel. He taught from Luke 18. That day 22 of the 31 people there who had no spiritual background, or stopped going to church, made decisions to follow Jesus. "For me, in a season of meetings and strategic plans, it was good to be in front of students again, asking them to give their lives to Jesus. Thank you for praying for us!"

Ken and Diane Kudo OC International

The Kudos have just begun their 43rd year of serving in Brazil. GOD has blessed them with a powerful long-term ministry with many coming to Christ. The Kudos and their church have also trained and sent missionaries to parts of Brazil and all over the world. One veteran Brazilian missionary couple, Guilherme and Leila Blois, have done cross-cultural church planting for 34 years.

In sharing about those who received Christ through the Kudos' influence, one person reflected about Ken. "I carry the Bible you gave me 33 years ago. My life has become healthy. My marriage has become wholesome to impact our friends so that they too can experience transformation by God's grace." Another Christian shared, "Look at our wedding ceremony! So many of the invited guests have never been impacted so powerfully as our wedding by hearing the gospel and seeing the contrast with their own lives." Ken and Diane conclude their prayer letter by affirming their supporters. "We praise God for your perseverance in supporting us through financial support and intercessory prayers. We are blessed that you are the backbone of this long -term endeavor."

Philip and Corenne Smith/Hope Unlimited

Philip shared "HOPE'S CHRISTMAS RECIPE FOR FAMILY". He lists seven essential ingredients for helping former street kids thrive.

1. "Greenhouse Effect": Hope is composed of greenhouses, which provide street kids distance from destructive influences, such as drug addiction. Their new life at HOPE then has a chance to take root.
2. "Show Me the Money": The former street kids need to see hope for their immediate future. HOPE provides internships with real jobs in the end for them. It is a real alternative to their former downward spiraling lifestyle.
3. "Positive Peer Culture": The former street kids need a positive peer group, where they can witness that making good choices is cool. In promoting this, proper ratios of fresh street kids to HOPE'S students bearing fruit gather together for nightly peer-led meetings. This will also foster accountability.
4. "Lysol or Hot Baked Bread?": Avoiding the "institutional" scent, HOPE raises kids in loving home environments with family norms and values. Under these conditions, the kids will go on to become loving husbands, wives, and parents.
5. "Been There Done That" Staff: Some of HOPE'S graduates return to serve, bringing with them their spouses and their own thriving children. They are equipped with specific training to help them hang tight as they lovingly, yet firmly handle kids who are masters in mischief and manipulation.
6. "Fitting In" (i.e. Community Integration): Hope provides an intentional program, which helps their kids feel comfortable mingling with the middle class. One example is weekend games with the local police force. The HOPE kids are still afraid to win, but friendships are building.
7. "Countdown to Launch": A year before their departure, HOPE provides an intensive transition program. They learn to prepare meals, budget, and take public transportation. At age 18, when they graduate and start their first job, they move in HOPE'S "half-way" homes. Independence is intertwined with responsibility. When they accomplish independence, they finally move out on their own.

HOPE is a family and one never graduates from a family. The door is always open and there's always room for one more. Praise GOD that 92% of HOPE UNLIMITED'S graduates are employed and involved in their communities. Philip challenges everyone to prayerfully consider giving a financial gift, so that HOPE'S family recipe can continue in 2019 and be passed on to future generations.

Tommy Dyo CRU

"I am blessed!" writes Tommy. Tommy is thankful for many positives in his life—his own salvation, his role as a minister of the Gospel, his family, his brother Danny's health, and his financial supporters and prayer partners. In just two months of the academic year, 40 students professed their faith in Jesus Christ! Tommy is thankful for his children, Noah and Mika, who are gifts of the LORD, as well as his wife, Melissa, who is grounded in the faith. Dr. Melissa Dyo is Undergraduate Director at Long Beach State School of Nursing. She is a witness in the lives of faculty and students. Tommy has good health in that he completed the Long Beach half-marathon even with three heart stents (Melissa ran it too). He is thankful for his brother Danny's healing from pancreatic cancer.

Tommy is thankful for his supporters' partnership, which has allowed him to do full time ministry for the past 30 years. He has reached students and faculty with the GOSPEL in the U.S, and around the world. He has been able to influence and change the organizational culture of several ministries. He has also mentored and developed the next generation of leaders, which has multiplied his ministry effectiveness.



(...continued from Missions, page 5)

Tommy Morse

Tommy is involved in three ongoing ministries in Hongodai—Bible Study, English café, and Noah International School. Four committed students (three of them being high school seniors) from church attend the Bible Study. God has been actively working in one student, who shared with an older woman from church, all he's received from the Bible Study. It included not only what God revealed to him in His Word, but also the encouragement he's received. Tommy revealed that, at the same time, this student is struggling with his mother's cancer. Tommy shared how exciting it has been to see how God has been working in this student's heart with his growing faith.

Regular meetings at the English Café bring out anywhere from three to 20 students a week. On the day in which there were only three students, a random person and his daughter joined the group. This man went to a university in California and lives only five minutes away from Tommy's apartment. Tommy asks that you remember the man and his daughter in prayer. "My time at the school (i.e. Noah International School) continues to be a blessing," Tommy affirmed. A chapel time is held twice a month. Most recently, a "blessing service" was part of the chapel time with two of the pastors from Hongodai Church praying for each student individually. There was also a special time to recognize and encourage two graduating seniors. The service isn't required, so it was exciting for Tommy to see a few non-Christian students attending!

Tommy requests prayer for the Bible Study and prayer meetings both held on Thursdays and English Café ministry, which takes place on Sundays. Please pray for the student and his family, whose mother has cancer. Pray for the mother's healing. The student has a bright, shining faith and pray that the church will be a good source of support for this student. Please also pray for Tommy's daily Japanese language study and God's guidance, as Tommy looks towards doing long term missions.

(...continued from Urbana, page 3)

Ryan Tsukamoto: Through the book of Revelations, I learned having a right view of the future will change the way we live today. Christ will be victorious over evil, therefore I will stay faithful and persevere. Prior to attending Urbana, I was prayerfully considering interning with Wycliffe this summer for IT. However through Urbana, God placed Bible translation on my heart. Over this next month, I will continue in the process of discerning if getting experience in Bible translation is the next step God has for me.

Ryan Uratsu: God taught me that as a follower of Jesus I ought not to have any "I shouldn't be here" places, meaning that if God calls me somewhere it is exactly where God wants me. He also reminded me that my hope ought to be fully placed in Jesus reconciling all things to himself at the end and that my ministry here on earth is not "needed" by God. He just calls me to be faithful to listening to his Word and leading. I think he is leading me to devote my heart to the YA while I can.

Joshua Pitpitan: I want to stop being selfish with my time and give it out for God's missions. And God laid on my heart about trauma missions in either the states or abroad.

Barry Kadowaki

That God's message in Revelations can be within my grasp. Before Urbana I've read Revelations, but didn't really come close to understanding it. Between the Bible Study, the sermons, and Brad's breakdowns in debriefing, I am reading all of Revelations again with a clearer understanding of it. Most of the seminars I went to were along the lines of how to reach your non Christian friends. It's been more and more on my heart to try and reach 2 of my closest friends.

Haruka Hikichi

I received so much encouragement from God and people from Urbana. From that, He taught me that I'm not alone and there's so many teammates of Christian in this world. In my community, there's so many people who don't know about Jesus and Bible. So I'm not thinking to go overseas but I want to spread of His Godspell in my close relationships.

(...continued from Urbana, page 6)

Teresa Matsushima:

At Urbana, I was reminded of God's heart for the unreached people groups of the world and our role in reaching them with His good news. I want to be open to continue to serve the Lord in medical missions as long as I am able. I want to consider short and long term missions. Although I don't have a specific place in mind, I'll be praying for discernment of His will for missions in my life.

Michele Hirano:

At one seminar about finding one's calling, the speaker encouraged us to be faithful and work hard as for the Lord rather than for man in whatever major or career path I am in. This challenged my ideas about what it means to personally serve and follow God. The education or job choices are not as important as having a mindset and heart attitude that seeks to become more like Christ. After this past week at Urbana, I believe God is challenging me to see the mission field around me as a college student. God is continuing to open my eyes and soften my heart to see the students at Cal State Northridge and the reality of their deprived spiritual state. God is gracious to provide evangelism opportunities on campus with the campus bible study I've joined and desire to make the sharing and spreading of the gospel a more frequent practice.

Jason Shiozaki:

God taught me many things such as key terms and requirements needed for missions, strategies to sharing the Gospel with non-Christians, the statistics of Japan, and everything about Japan and what you need to know. And overall the worship was good. I really enjoyed some of the messages that the speakers spoke at the main sessions. I learned a lot from Revelations, the book of the Bible we studied. Especially about Japan, I learned some things that I believe God is calling me to. For missionary involvement, I would say going to Japan. I feel more called to go to Japan and I want to help those in Japan who are in need. I learned that Japan needs help, spiritually more than ever.

Wesley Shiozaki:

I learned the importance of being a light and faithful witness to the world. The world is suffering so much and needs Christ's love. God can do great things in me, I just need to trust in his guidance and give my future and plans to him.

I am not sure but I am praying about it. Possibly ministry at church but I am definitely open to doing ministry in a different part of the country or around the world. I am also doing missions through working on technology for it through computers.



FAMILY NEWS

Donations and Flowers given
in honor or loving memory
FROM

Ueda Memorial Fund
Brian & Joyce Gohata
Sally Furuta

TO

Edith Matsumura
Tom & Jan Gohata
Carl Furuta

Monetary donations given in honor or memory of loved ones
support College Scholarship Fund, unless specified.

LETTERS TO OUR GVBC FAMILY

Dear GVBC,

My heartfelt thank you on the beautiful orchid plant I received during my short stay in the hospital – just in time to celebrate with you on the completion of the Nehemiah Project! God is good!
George Hirano



MINISTRY OUTLOOK

Feb 8-9	GVBC Marriage Conference
Feb 11-15	City of Gardena Appreciation
Feb 15-17	Children's Winter Camp @ Forest Home
Feb 22-24	Youth Winter Camp @ Oak Glen
Feb 24	GVBC Annual Business Meeting



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