



GARDENA VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH



WHEN GVBC ALMOST **MOVED**

BY PASTOR JAMES

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19 years ago, before we started our \$10.5 Million Building Campaign to renovate our church facilities, did you know that GVBC almost moved?

Rather than remodel our current facility, we could move into a nicer location in the South Bay. *Now that makes a lot of sense!* We could have had a more convenient location in the South Bay. Many of our church members were already moving. Neighborhoods are nicer. Schools rate higher. Streets are safer. Location, Location, Location! But, our Board and Planning Committee at the time prayed and prayed. And through prayer, they realized God was calling us to stay here in the heart of Gardena. *This did NOT make sense!* We are just a couple blocks away from the Hustler Casino; Our city's crime rate is higher; Our city's hospital rating is lower; Our city's local schools are struggling; And what makes the most human sense is to move out.

But you will receive
power when the Holy
Spirit comes on you;
and you will be my
witnesses in
Jerusalem, and in all
Judea and Samaria, and
to the ends of the
earth.

Acts 1:8

Jesus' plan of outreach started with the neighborhood. The geographical outline of Acts moves in concentric circles rippling outward from Jerusalem to the surrounding Judean area to their enemy neighbors in Samaria and then to the wider Greco-Roman world. If your ministry can transform your own neighborhood—especially to forgive your enemy neighbors—then it can reach the world for Christ.

On a personal level, as a husband and father of 2 little children living in Gardena, I honestly struggle with this. I would give my arm and a leg so my children could study in the best schools possible and play in the safest neighborhoods possible. But: I do believe that God has called our church to our city; and before pastoring, I was an urban school math teacher, who lived intentionally in Lawndale next to my students and worked toward the transformation of my struggling community through education.

What I am not saying here is: let's all move into our church's backyard. But, having lived in the South Bay long enough, there has been a tendency to *lean away* from Gardena. And I would like for us to *lean back in* with the heart of God. Just imagine if we filled our local hospitals with nurses carrying the heart of Jesus, filled our local schools with teachers carrying the heart of Jesus, and filled our local business owners carrying the heart of Jesus. They say a lamp lights everywhere in the room, except the dark spot underneath it. We pour so much into *global* missions afar and praise God for it! But our church has a dark spot called our *local* mission field, and it's just down the street. I believe that wherever there is a church, the community around it blessed, and the Lazarus outside our gate is cared for (Luke 16:20).

In this Spirit issue, you'll see some of our GVBC Neighborhood Ministry programs built to intentionally step outside of our church walls and love our City. Our most recent ministry launch this October month is to drive bento meals to homebound seniors in our city. But these are not just programs for us. The planning core of Neighborhood Ministry is comprised of local young families just trying to make a difference so the gospel of Jesus can transform our neighborhood in the City of Gardena.

with all my life,
Pastor James



BY JAMES CHANG

On Saturday, September 21, 2019, 50+ GVBC volunteers joined 400+ volunteers from all over Gardena for the 20th Annual “Keep Gardena Beautiful” City Cleanup day. This year, we focused on gardening in the Willows Wetlands and Street Cleaning along Marine Ave. as well as the alleys behind Crenshaw Blvd. Both English and Nihongo, and young and old were able to step outside the walls of GVBC and serve Jesus Christ in our city in a practical way. Afterwards, we enjoyed a yummy lunch provided by a collection of local food joints at Mas Fukai park together with our City officials, connecting with many organizations, businesses, schools, and churches all across our City.



RYAN NAKAMURA (14 YEARS OLD)

I am currently attending Torrance high as a freshman. I have known about Christ ever since I was born. My parents went to church, and brought me along every Sunday. When I was about 8, I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior. But in the years following, I really started to doubt the existence of God. The things of this world would constantly be trying to convince me that being a Christian was "uncool". Additionally, I was never really accepted by others. Pretty much all of my interests aren't very common among people at school, and I wasn't the most popular individual. However, church was a place where I was accepted, and I didn't have to worry about not fitting in. I also learned that God loves us, no matter how unpopular we are. Whenever something bad happens, I tend to blame it on God, and often think that He doesn't love me. But at youth group at GVBC, we are currently learning about God's faithfulness. Everything that happens is part of God's plan, and even when things go wrong in our eyes, they are not mistakes in His story. Over the past few months, a worship song that stood out to me was "Who you say I am". My favorite line states "I am chosen, not forsaken, I am who you say I am." I may not be similar to everyone else in the crowd. But I was created by God, and in his image, and I am content with who I am. I do not know what will come next in my life. But what I do know is that God is in control, and his love never fails. Thank you

MIA MAYEDA (12 YEARS OLD)

Around 2nd grade I realized Jesus was true and I was a sinner. I accepted him as my Lord and Savior when I was in 3rd grade with my friend Katie during VBS. But in 6th grade, that was when I really started to pray more, worship from the heart and not just the mouth, and when God increased my faith. Knowing Jesus has changed my life because I now have someone to look up to when I worry. I have someone to look up to when I am scared or taking tests. Knowing God is there to guide me makes me feel better. If I didn't know Jesus, I think I would be scared and nervous because I worry a lot, but then I know Jesus is with me. I now have a powerful God to comfort me when I am anxious. Now that I am in 7th grade, I get to be part of leading the CGF or Casmir Gospel Fellowship. This is a Christian club at my school. I hope more students at Casmir would be saved and adopted into God's family and that God will use me to be a part of it. I am really happy God gave me the opportunity. One Bible verse that is significant to me is Ephesians 4:32. "Be kind and compassionate to one another just as Christ God forgave you." This is significant to me because it reminds me that God has forgiven my sins through Jesus and it calls me to be kind and compassionate just like God.

MITCHELL SHIROTA (13 YEARS OLD)

Originally I had always seen church as a school of some sort, a place to learn and study. But as I grew up I started to see church as less than a school, but more like a place to learn and study about God and what he has done for us and the miracles he has performed. I once had thought "those miracles had only happened in the Bible, there's no way that could happen to me." but one day it did happen, in the form of Youth Summer camp. That week had changed my entire life. We had a great time while learning about Christ. In the evening, we had study sessions and did activities with our guest speaker at camp. Some of which were one of the most emotional times in my life. During one of those nights I had confided with my cabin leader things that were going on in my life and let loose the burden on my shoulders. As usual, at the end of every camp we were asked if we wanted to accept Jesus Christ into our lives, and for the first time, I truly felt that the answer was yes. After that I started truly believing in Christ and looked back on my life, I realized that I was a sinful person and that Jesus Christ was the only one that could rescue me. My life has been less stressful as a result of knowing Jesus because I find comfort that God is all knowing and that He knows everything that happens, when it happens. A verse that I found and used was Psalm 139:4 "Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. This verse tells about how God knows all the actions we take and knows everything that happens all the time.

KENTA CAREY (14 YEARS)

I have been going to this church for two years now and I would like to present you my testimony. I was first introduced to Christ when I was 8 years old after we moved from Japan. At first, I didn't really care about the messages and saw the church as a school for learning Bible facts. But God really met me 2 years ago when I was trying to cope with loss. When I was 13, my grandma passed away and it really troubled me...A few months later, we found GVBC and we really liked it because it was a Japanese American Baptist Church. At first, I thought this would be a temporary church as we were trying out many churches in the area. But I soon joined the youth group and made a lot of friends. There I learned many things about God and his many blessings that he has given us. I truly understood about His plans when I went to Youth camp over a year ago. There, I learned about many things about Christ and his blessings. We did skits and activities that really showed God's attributes in detail. I also learned that I must accept loss and see that this is all in the work of His plan to help me become a believer. After that, I started to follow Jesus Christ and wanted to get baptized. My favorite verse in Ephesians 2:10. It says that "For we are God's masterpiece, he has created us anew in Jesus Christ, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago." Long ago, God knew that I would choose to get baptized today. I have confidence that God has more things planned for me. One of these things is sharing the gospel with non-believers.

PATRICK WANG (13 YEARS)

I've been introduced to Christ ever since I was a baby, but I barely remember that time. However, when I was introduced to the Youth Ministry in 6th grade, my view of Christianity completely changed and I began to take things much more seriously. Still, I made mistakes. I still felt like things in my life could be resolved by violence, so I would still act aggressively. Because of this, people - even some of my friends - questioned me, asking if I was really a Christian or if it was all an act. At that point, I didn't even know. I had the opportunity to go to Summer Camp 2018, where we studied the theme Endless Worship. The camp showed me that I can worship God in everything I do. It was also at that camp where I got to know more people, and I tried to treat people better. After this camp, I decided to accept Jesus Christ into my life and I chose to try my best to follow him. I achieved my goal, but only until school started. When school started, there was some stress and I was tempted by a lot of people to do things that I shouldn't do. On one such instance, I had someone in a headlock because of a minuscule argument. I really didn't know where I was in my walk with Christ. Then, this past summer camp came around. The theme was History, and both the theme and what we did there was really humbling and I was able to see that nobody is truly perfect and everyone sins. Now, a new year of school has started, and even this early into school there's been temptations. However, I've learned a lot and have gained some level of maturity, and with the help of God and my peers, I've been able to resist these temptations. A Bible verse that has been significant to me is Matthew 7:1-2. "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." This verse has really affected me especially during school. I see people doing bad things and I think to myself "Wow. What a bad person." And then I look at myself, my friends, and everyone else and notice that everybody's bad. Nobody is sinless. Yet God still treasures us.

NATALIE ASHIKAWA (12 YEARS)

I remember in the summer before third grade was when I attended a VBS. I remember sitting in a chair and our pastor asked us to close our eyes and raise our hands if we wanted to accept Christ into our lives. I was ready and I closed my eyes and raised my hand and repeated a prayer that the pastor said. I prayed for Jesus to be in my life and asked him to take away my sin. After accepting Jesus, I thought that my life would be happy and I wouldn't have a lot of problems. But then I realized that hardships in life do come, and learned that God would be with me in the hardships. He also challenges me through trials in life. The Christian life is not a smooth path, we have bumpy rocks and hills to get through. One hardship that I can clearly remember was that my grandpa passed away. I was devastated. I really loved my grandpa and was sad that he was gone. I wasn't actually there when it happened but my father told me that he had accepted Christ as he passed away. To this day I believe that my grandpa is watching me in heaven. As I have been reading the Bible, I came across this special Bible verse. It is Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." This Bible verse reminds me to stay strong in the Lord whether my life is going well, and I'm happy or when challenges come and I feel knocked down. It is Jesus who gives me the strength to keep going.

NEIL IKEGAMI (12 YEARS OLD)

I've been coming to Gardena Valley Baptist church since I was born. I attended Sunday school, VBS, and Youth Camps. Growing up in a church environment I was always encouraged by my teachers and parents to accept Christ in my heart. During sixth grade, I started to question if I had really accepted Jesus in my heart and if I would really go to heaven. I started thinking am I really a christian and is heaven real. That's when my mom and I prayed together and my mom shared that when I accept Christ, Jesus will never leave me, and God gave us the Bible to learn about his truths. When I accepted Jesus Christ in my heart I realized I am a sinner and because Jesus died on the cross I am forgiven. God's Word is like a sword and the more I know about the Bible the better I can apply it. I can use this to battle Satan's lies and the doubts I may have in my mind. Even though my faith is just starting out, I'm excited to grow in my faith. I know life isn't going to be perfect, but I am thankful to be able to trust in a God who is perfect.

THOMAS KANESHIGE (19 YEARS OLD)

I will be starting my second year this week at UCLA studying Computer Science. The story of God's grace in my life begins with Him raising me up at GVBC and in a Christian family. But I'm sure you all know that those two things alone do not guarantee you a strong faith. My problem for most of my life was this: my faith was only a high priority, and not my top priority. Throughout high school, it would always be my interests first. I was all for being a good person and having good morals, but I was not all for being an ambassador for Christ in this world. I was a good student first, and a Christian second. Even though I professed faith with my mouth, my life was nothing but a quest for worldly joys. And at the end of the day, I was left with only this: a question - "Is this really all there is to life?" In my pursuit to find worldly satisfaction, I found the exact opposite; I had discovered the fleeting nature of life. Instead of feeling accomplished for the things I had done, I felt that my life up until that point was wasted almost entirely. But God used those thoughts and feelings for my own good. Last summer, I joined the College Ministry. I vividly remember going through John Piper's book, Don't Waste Your Life, with the men's small group. That book reminded me of the call of the Christian in Scripture, and it convicted me on how my past 18 years of life had not reflected that at all. It was from that summer that I recognized my faith should not be just a "high priority", because my faith cannot be just that. It is an "all" or "none" response.

So for me, the only reasonable response to the Gospel is full submission to it. God taught me (and is still teaching me) the hard way that there is nothing else worth living for in this life aside from Christ. One of my favorite passages comes from Philippians 3:7-10. "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God that depends on faith - that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."

CLYDE ASATO

My name is Clyde Asato. In the very near future, I will be 75 years old. I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I have identified myself as a Christian ever since I was a toddler and sang the song "Jesus Loves Me." But growing up, I faced a number of dark hours in my life when I thought, I might not see tomorrow. It was like the fate of my life was balancing as on a weight scale. In Vietnam, a chaplain's prayer caused me to reevaluate my priorities, and I recommitted my life to following Jesus. Having survived various near-death experiences including life-saving surgery, I now know it had to be God. So in my prayers, I always thank God the Father "for this life." Jesus is truly my savior. Not only has he saved my life, but he has redeemed me from my past sins and given me eternal life. Jesus has guided me to know right from wrong, and I now treat people with greater respect and acceptance. I believe the gospel is the word from GOD... it articulates, the act of our hearts, and how we express our Christian commitment. I'd like to share 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, which to me is a great description of our Christian mission. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ." This passage tells me that Christ died for our sins, saving us by suffering in abundance for our pain, so also we must show kindness-in-heart and sympathy to others. The truth is the truth... the truth is always true. When we hear the toddlers sing "Jesus Loves Me," it is true today for all of us, as it was for me 70 years ago. Today's baptism symbolizes my rebirth, demonstrating that I have chosen Jesus Christ to come into my life and be my Savior.



KEIRO LUNCHEON

GVBC Nihongo Ministry has a group called "Keiro-kai" which is formed with our members and regular attendees who are over 80 years old. "Keiro-kai" has now 28 members altogether and Nihongo Ministry had a Keiro Luncheon to celebrates their long life on September 15 after Sunday Nihongo service. Out of 28 Keiro-kai members, 17 of them attended Nihongo service and joined this special luncheon. We enjoyed together a special lunch as well as songs and dances from Nihongo Sunday School children and College/Young Adult group members.



FAMILY NEWS

FLOWERS

Donations and Flowers given in honor or loving memory:

FROM

Chiyo Aiso
Amy Kato
Leigh & Katie Fukuzawa
Patsy & Paul Hasegawa
Mary Maeda

TO

Kathy Aiso
Kathy Aiso
Michito Frank Fukuzawa
Molly Nishimoto
Mike Maeda

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

SHORT TERM MISSIONARY: TOMMY SHIROTA



I want to thank you for praying and supporting me as I serve with the National School Project (NSP) again this year! Our mission is still to see every student reached with the gospel through a partnership with local churches and Christian clubs! Over the next 1000 days, NSP

strives to bring the gospel to 1 million students across the United States! We are launching a movement for the first time called Meant for More. Believers on campus are the best people to bring this message of redemption and forgiveness to those who don't know. In March, hundreds of schools across the nation will be launching a Meant for More outreach week on their campus all at the same time; all with the same message, "You were meant for more". Please pray BOLD prayers with me to the God who can answer them!

- Please pray for high school students who are bold for the gospel to rise up and share the hope they have!
- Please pray for quality college-age coaches who have hearts to serve this generation of students!

LETTERS

Dear Church Family,

I am so thankful to my GVBC church family for the beautiful yellow and white flower arrangement that was sent to my father, Shigeru Ishii's, memorial service on September 6. It was a generous and thoughtful gesture to me and my family. I am also thankful to many of you for your prayers and for those who sent me cards, generous gifts, phone messages, and took the time to attend the memorial service. Thank you to the friends who provided delicious desserts for the reception afterwards. It has truly been my privilege and joy to be a part of this church family.

With love and a grateful heart,

Wendy J. Hirano (the Wendy who is married to Paul)

Dear GVBC,

We appreciate your condolences in our loss of Kathy. Your kindness has meant so much to us. We draw comfort in knowing that Kathy is at home with the Lord. Thank you for the beautiful arrangement of flowers given for Kathy's memorial service. We have been deeply touched by the support and love shown by the church body.

With gratitude,

The Aiso Family

Thank you for awarding me the Christian Service Scholarship. I am appreciative of the support and will be using the money to help pay for college expenses during my second year at El Camino College. Thank you for investing in me as I continue in my education.

Jonathan Cheng



MINISTRY OUTLOOK

October 18-20	Youth Leaders' Retreat
October 26	Women's Breakfast
October 31	Harvest Festival
November 9	Refresh



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