



Cerritos Baptist Church

Experiencing Grace, Growing in Love.

messenger

Spring 2015



Coming Home

This past summer I quit my job as a civil engineer. On paper my career as an engineer was

going well. I earned my professional license. My company let me work remotely when I moved from Northern California to Los Angeles. They even recently gave me a raise.

But deep within my soul I knew that I was meant to do something else with my life. I sensed that my years of seminary study were not a mistake and that they were meant for more than just my personal edification.

So I decided to take a chance. Through the generosity of a few anonymous donors (Thank you. I still don't know who you are) I joined CBC staff part time for a single fiscal year, serving as Interim Young Adult Pastor. There are no guarantees for next year, but I trust that God has something significant in store.

As a mischievous pastor's kid growing up here at CBC, I lived under the assumption that I was not accepted. I did what many children do when they feel insecure. I pushed boundaries and disobeyed rules.

I made my Sunday school teachers' jobs very challenging. If you ask JoAnn Kaba how she remembers me as a kid, she'll roll her eyes and say something like, "Whenever I have a problem kid today, I just think about how much worse Nick Tawa was. If Nick turned out okay, there's hope for anyone."

I never thought that I would be serving on staff at the church where I grew up. If there was one community in the world that banned me from serving due to past experience, it would be CBC.

On March 31, 2002 on Easter Sunday, my dad (Pastor Gary) gave a sermon on the Prodigal Son. He closed with an emotionally charged story of my rebellious high school days transitioning into my departure for college. He described a particularly tense argument we had, that had ended with him thinking to himself, "Man, I'm losing him."

When my parents had dropped me off at the dorms of UC San Diego the year before, we had all cried. Our tears communicated that our family bonds were meaningful even in the most tense and distant of times.

Before driving away my dad handed me a letter that ended with, "You're welcome to come home anytime. Anytime. Just call."

Those words echoed the heart of God the Father, calling out to his lost children: "Come home anytime. It doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done. Just come home."

I believe that as we get older, our longing for home gets stronger.

While home may no longer be a physical house, we still long for a place where we can feel safe and accepted.

We sometimes work very hard to satisfy this longing through our physical homes, our 401k portfolios or some other worldly mark of security.

And while these are not bad things, our most raw and honest longings for home will only find fulfillment in God the Father, through faith in Jesus.

I see tremendous significance to me being back at CBC for this season of ministry.

It's healing for me to serve a community with some of the same nursery workers who changed my diapers and the same Sunday school teachers who gave me my first Bible.

It's healing for me to serve on the same staff as my dad. It's healing for me to serve with JoAnn, reminiscing about my less compliant years.

So here's to transitions, and to a God who moves and convicts and heals in every generation.

~ Nick Tawa



▲ The Tawa family at last year's Retirement party for Nick's dad (aka Pastor Gary)

CBC Senior Bible Study Group

If you have tried to read and understand the Bible like I have, you probably have experienced the same challenge as I have. Even with the NIV translation, I find that understanding what the verses are really trying to convey is somewhat challenging.

Well, if you feel like this, one good solution is to attend any of Brian Kaba's Bible study courses. One of these opportunities is the weekly Senior Bible study class held on Mondays at 7PM and Wednesdays at 11AM.

Brian provided us with very helpful study aids. For example, when we studied the Book of Isaiah, he provided two study aids:

(1) Timeline summarizing the Kings which ruled Judah and Israel from 931 BC to 586 BC, and the timeline covered by the Book of Isaiah (740 BC to 537 BC). Brian also mentioned that almost all the kings during this time were bad;

(2) Keys to understanding Isaiah which included explanations of many concepts used such as "double reference", "forth telling" and "foretelling"



▲ Seniors at Union Station, on the way home from their museum field trip.

prophecy types, and "figurative" vs. "literal" language.

Having these definitions and Brian's extensive knowledge and understanding of the Bible really helps us get the big picture. We can read the Bible verses and understand the details of the story being told.

The other activities which Brian coordinates are the fun field trips which always include a nice place to eat.

These trips are open to all seniors, so you are not required to attend the Bible study to attend.

Two of the trips we have taken include:

(1) Chinese American Museum, located across from the Union Station in Los Angeles. This trip had the added adventure of taking the Metro trains starting with the Green Line, the Blue Line and then the Red Line to Union Station. We ate Dim Sum for lunch at a nearby Chinese Restaurant.

(2) Chen Art Gallery located in the Sunrider International headquarters building in Torrance. This museum contains over 1,000 Chinese artifacts spanning over 5,000 years of Chinese history. Afterwards we had lunch at King's Hawaiian Restaurant.

Other destinations include the Ronald Reagan Library in Simi Valley, the Annenberg Photography Museum in Century City, and the USC Pacific Asia Museum in Pasadena.

~ Jim Jang



Thank you to coordinator Nancy Nagayama and generous donors! We granted 30 Christmas gift wish slips and gave over \$200 in gift cards to at-risk children and teens at Olive Crest. Please continue to give generously and bless at-risk families as we participate in the Easter Basket Drive this month!

CBC Staff

Erik Kakimoto
Senior Pastor

JoAnn Kaba
Children's & Missions Director

Donna Katagi
Executive Pastor

Brandon Katagi
Worship & Youth Pastor

Nick Tawa
Interim Young Adult Pastor

Gary Tawa
Pastor to the Seniors

Kacy Nagatoshi
Children's Co-Director

Jon Tawa
Community Life Director

Steve Koshimizu
Administrative Assistant

Howard Ying, Pastoral Intern
Lyndsey Asami, Intern

Straightforward Youth

What is *Straightforward*? So many people have no clue what it means, but I do! I have been in youth group, and I'm now a staff leader.

The youth of CBC are spectacular! Their lives are changing everyday. The one thing that stands out to me is how they are searching for identity. No matter the age, they are trying to understand who they are and what they are meant to do in life.

What I most enjoy is when the youth start to worship. They worship as one, loud and proud, jumping and swaying, full of passion, proclaiming the love they have for the Lord, and wanting you to join in.

They also amaze me every Friday night with the love they show for one another. Willing to let their guard down and show how hurt or broken they are, they let others spring into action with love and lifting them up with grace. It's a beautiful sight to behold.

They learn more about how to imple-

ment God into their life at youth meetings. It's so easy to get caught up in school and forget about God, but those who come out every Friday and Sunday show how hungry they are to know more about Christ.

To answer the question, *what is Straightforward*? It's a place for youth to come be themselves, understand who they are, and know that they are a part of a family full of grace and love. I'm proud to say I am a part of helping show God's great love to this up and coming generation.

~ Jania Choyce



▲ Jania and other youth staff at Youth Retreat in January.

Missionary Highlight

This year the Missions Committee would like to share with you about the missionaries we support. It is our responsibility as a church to not only give financially, but also to be in prayer for our missionaries. Our highlight this month is the Yamadas.

Hitoshi and Kathy Yamada are missionaries who worked in Brazil. They ministered to the Japanese community in the Amazon, and had served the Lord as missionaries for 42 years.

We've supported them through part of that time, and also in their retirement. In their retirement they continued to serve at New Life community Church of the Nazarene. There Kathy facilitated a small group and gave messages at a church in Santa Maria.

They celebrated their 50th anniversary as a couple last August, and their family threw them a big celebration.

Then unexpectedly, in October, it was found that Kathy had lung cancer. She underwent chemo, then sadly, passed away in December.

Many shared at Kathy's funeral that she was "a woman that walked with God." She served people and made Jesus known wherever she went.

There were stories from a number of people that she had touched. One of them said, "because of Kathy and Hitoshi's obedience to come to Belem in Brazil, we accepted Christ as our true and only Savior."

Another said, "one day Kathy asked me if I wanted to accept Jesus, and I

said 'yes' right there. After that, one by one, my brothers also came to Christ, and later my mother."

She also left a legacy in Brazil. One person spoke about one of Kathy's disciples and said, "she is the fruit of their labor and is evangelizing the next generation of Japanese and Brazilians in Para."

Please pray for the following:

- ◆ Praise for all the ways the Lord has been glorified through Kathy & Hitoshi's faithfulness
- ◆ That the Lord would continue to do a good work where He has planted seeds through Kathy and Hitoshi's ministries
- ◆ Comfort and peace for the Yamada family as they go through this time of mourning after Kathy's passing.

~ Luini Tan

LORD'S DAY SERMONS

Grace Unveiled: Why Easter Matters

March 1 – Donna Katagi
March 8 – Nick Tawa
March 15 – Erik Kakimoto
March 22 – Donna Katagi
March 29 – Nick Tawa
April 5 - Erik Kakimoto

Please check the website at www.cerritosbaptist.org for updated sermon information and to listen to past messages.

CONDOLENCES



We pray for Brian and JoAnn Kaba and family on the homegoing of JoAnn's mother, Anna Taka on November 29th. Funeral services were held on December 16th at Venice-Santa Monica Free Methodist Church, where JoAnn's mom received Christ and grew to love Jesus in her senior years.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ♦ **Bible Miniseries** – Began on Feb 8, and continuing until April 12. You are invited to join the miniseries anytime! A delicious dinner is served at 6 pm, followed by brief pre-video talk, viewing the DVD episode, and small group discussions.
- ♦ **Good Friday Service** – Friday evening, April 3 at 7:30 pm. Please join us to worship and remember Jesus' love for us on the cross. Everyone is welcome, including children and families, for this interactive worship service.
- ♦ **Easter Service** – Special times for Easter: "Sunrise" service at 7 am, and second service at 10 am. Join us for pancake breakfast between services!

CONGRATULATIONS!



We celebrate with Brandon and Alyssa Katagi (and Kaya) on the birth of Greyson Charlie on January 22nd. Greyson was 7 lb. 3 oz, 20.5 in long at birth.

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Worship Services..... Sunday 9 & 11 a.m.
Children & Youth Ministries during morning services. Call for details.
Church Office Hours..... Tuesday - Friday 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
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