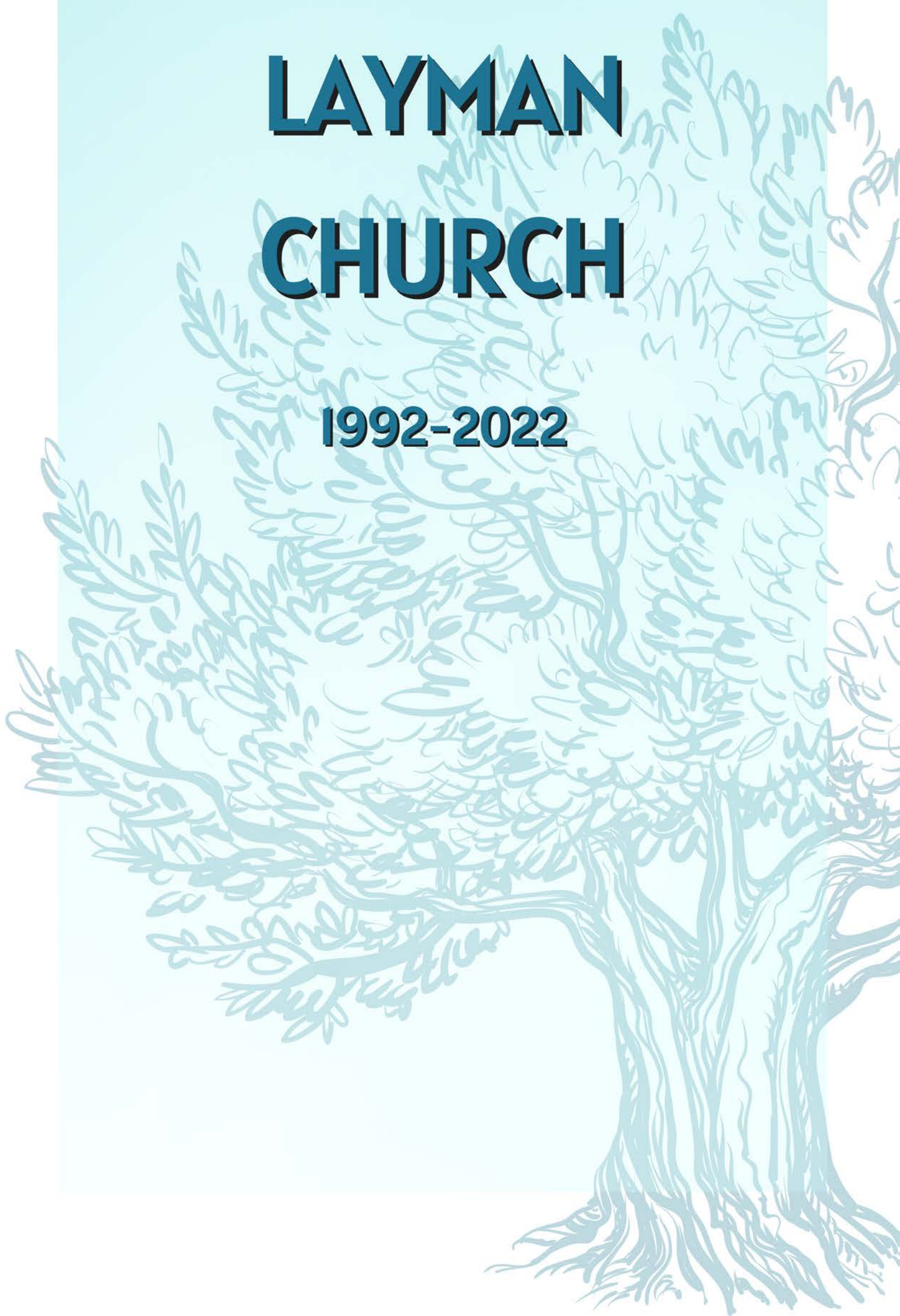


# **HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN LAYMAN CHURCH**

**1992-2022**







*1922 Founding families: Mr. & Mrs. Hisashi Sano, Mr. & Mrs. Noburo Takahashi, Ryosaku Matsuoka, Genichi Hoshiga, and Kunisaburo Nomiya.*

# 1922...

Christian Layman Church came to existence when several Issei (1st-generation Japanese) Christians withdrew from a local church in Berkeley, CA in 1922. They felt its teachings were too liberal, and began holding their own meetings. The first Sunday School class was conducted in 1922 by Mrs. Matsuoka with three students: her daughter and Mrs. Yanagi's two children. They met at the Sano's home on Oregon Street and later moved to the home of Mrs. Yanagi on Blake Street. In 1972, several Issei members recounted how Mr. Matsuoka, Mr. Manabe and others visited them and invited their families to church. These men drove the Nisei children to Sunday School and then back home again.

The Issei parents were moved by their kindness and began coming to church as well. Other Issei came to church because they were invited by church members from the same ken (district in Japan), and others because they were neighbors. Some families drove many miles to come to the church.

In 1928, the size of the meetings outgrew the private homes and a large two-story house at 1707 Ward Street was purchased. The Ward Street building was purchased in the names of four Niseis (2nd-generation Japanese-Americans): Hana Kamiya (21), Kiyoji Kanehara (21), Masunobu Tsukazaki (12), and Nobumitsu Takahashi (14), as their parents were aliens and were not allowed to own property in California.



# 1922 - 1931



c. 1924-1928 Church was held at the Fukami residence.



c. 1926 A meeting with the Free Methodist Church.

*In the 1920s a very popular movement of certain religions known as "New Theology," started in Germany. It is my understanding, this so-called "new Theology" tried to interpret the Bible through a rational method. If something mentioned in the Bible was not proven through advance science, it should be eliminated. For instance, the scene of Christ's transfiguration was caused by the moonlight shining on his*

*person, and not glorification by God. The Bible says that Elijah and Moses appeared before Christ, but the "new Theology" says two of his disciples came up the hill to see Christ. Many theology scholars were influenced by this "New Theology."*

*During that time in the church a young pastor, a theological seminary graduate, was assigned. The young pastor was an ardent advocate of the New Theology to the extent that he publicly claimed that he did not believe in the resurrection of Christ. The seven members were greatly shocked, because they firmly believed that the Bible is the words of God written by direction of God; therefore it was the book of devotion. They particularly believed that without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that Christianity would vanish, with its cross from the earth.*

*Some of the group of seven tried to personally talk with the pastor, but without avail. One day, an official sent from the main office came to a meeting and said, "Those who could not agree with the pastor should leave the church." The group of seven people stood up, and quietly left the church.*

*After the incident, the 7 people banded together in the name of our Lord and started family meetings, with the Bible as their guide, looking up to our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Every Sunday, the 5 men would take turns, conducted a meeting to worship their Lord. On Thursday nights, they had Bible Study meetings. They prayed together and demonstrated what it meant to have a devotional life, to be a Christ-like Christian.*

*I am very happy to say that this wonderful thing happened to us only through the grace of our Heavenly Father and the love of Jesus Christ who has led us through all these years. We praise the sacred name of Jesus Christ and testify the glory of our Lord."*

*Tomiko Hino  
Translated by Masako Hamada*





# 1932...

By the late 1930s , there were over 25 families regularly attending the church, with roughly 30-40 Issei and a Nisei Sunday School of about 50-60 children. The meetings and services continued to be conducted in Japanese in the Ward Street building with laypersons sharing sermons and personal testimonies as well as Japanese hymns and prayers. Services were attended by the older Niseis as well as the Issei family members. Other church activities at the time included: weeknight family prayer meetings held in private homes; an early morning prayer meeting called *so ten kito kai* held every Sunday at 6:30 a.m.; *seinen kai*, a youth group; and *kodomo no kai*, the children's group organized for the Nisei children once a month on Sunday afternoons. There were special Easter and Christmas programs, plus a Mother's Day Tea event, where children would share their musical talents, and fathers would join together to sing Japanese folk songs and provide refreshments for the occasion. Church picnics with softball games were also favorite activities.



# 1932 - 1941

*The following are some of my recollections of my family's participation in the Christian Layman Church in the late 1930's. I'm relying on my memory as a little girl of 5 or 6 years old and comments I heard over the years from Mr. & Mrs. Matsuoka, Helen Nishiyama and Miss Hino.*

*My father, Gonrokuro Uyeda, began attending the Christian Layman Church in the late 1920's. He wrote, published and distributed the weekly church newsletter during the 1930's. We lived at 1301 Oxford St., on the large property owned by Mrs. Welker. My father, Mr. & Mrs. Hosokawa and Mrs. Yukio Sera were all employees of hers. We all attended the Layman Church together.*

*Mrs. Welker made annual trips to Hawaii which lasted a couple months. When she was away, Mr. Hosokawa, who was the caretaker of this big house, often invited the young people from the church. The young people enjoyed coming to the big house to gather for Bible Study, singing, and having delicious meals prepared by Mr. Hosokawa who was a wonderful cook. It was a nice opportunity for a social get-together.*

*Every week, when my father finished writing the newsletter stencil, we would go to the Matsuoka house to print, assemble, and fold it. It was a weekly routine that I looked forward to. Frequently, we had dinner with the Matsuoka's or after the newsletter was finished, there would be tea and rice cakes served. Since I was the only little child there, much attention was paid to me, which no doubt I enjoyed.*

*Yoshine Uyeda (Ruth Yoshine Hayashi)*







*1944 Jerome Relocation Center, Arkansas*

# 1942...

The internment of Christian Layman Church members during World War II profoundly affected the course and nature of the church as members were uprooted and forced into concentration camps. The church became a storage place for families' belongings. Each classroom held the personal items of one or two families. One member, Aiko Mayeda, vividly remembers her family being the last ones to store their belongings at the church, lock up the building, and leave to board the soldier-guarded buses for the Tanforan Assembly Center. Many of the church members were relocated to the camp in Topaz, Utah. There were joint services for all the Protestant churches conducted by ministers from various denominations. The services were held separately in Japanese and English. For the Christian Layman Nisei, it was the first time they had heard a sermon in English, and many said they preferred this to Japanese sermons. There were also four different Sunday Schools for the many children. Miss Tomiko Hino was in charge of one of these schools.



# 1942 - 1951

*On Sunday, December 7, 1941, Bill Inouye, Yaho Yamaguchi, Atsuno Yamaguchi, Mrs. Kiku Yamaguchi and I, were driving to the church. As we were driving, we noticed that people were shaking their fists and yelling, "You dirty Japs" at us. We turned on the car radio to learn that the Japanese planes had bombed Pearl Harbor. Thus started a new and very uncertain period in our lives.*



*December 7, 1941, was also the day that Dr. Mas Tsukasaki and Etsu Kanagaki (Phyllis) were married. Despite the circumstances, the wedding went as planned and we attended their reception at a Chinese restaurant. Their marriage*

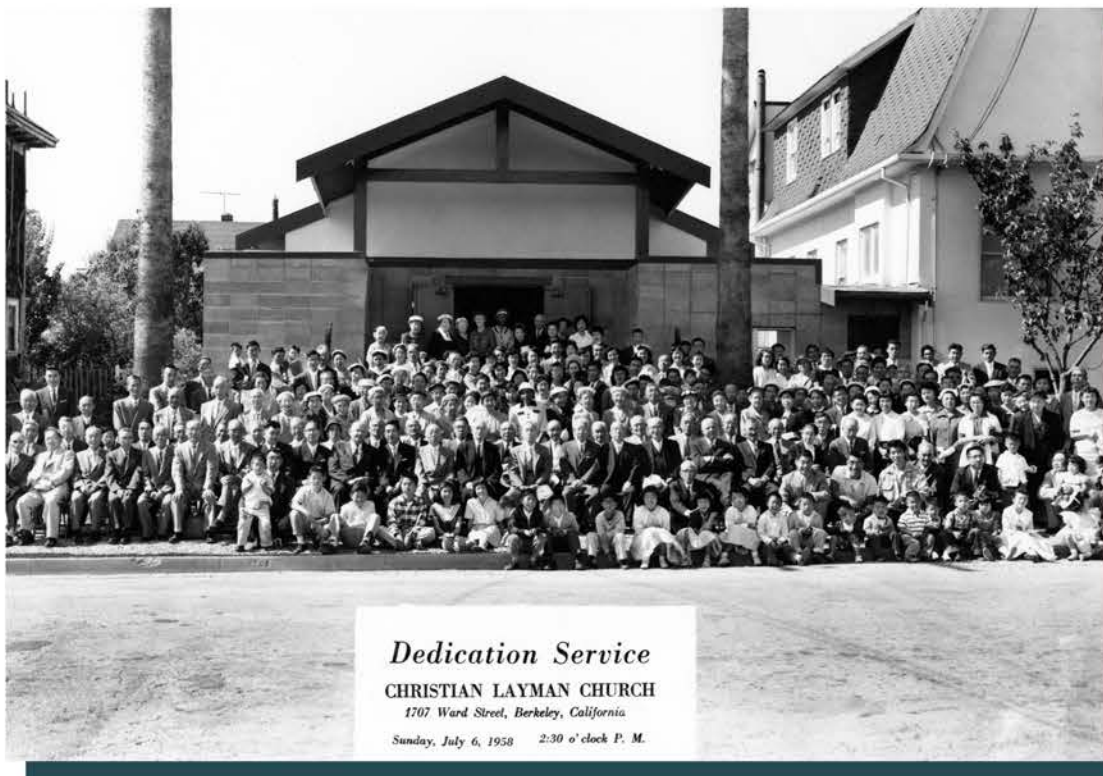


*was certainly blessed by God, as they were together for more than 60 years later.*

*Many Japanese were evacuated in 1942, but I fought for the U.S. in the 442. I came back to the Bay Area in 1946, and even though I had not attended Layman Church for 4 years, when I was at Letterman General Hospital in the Presidio of San Francisco, Miss Hino along with young people from Layman came to visit me. I was very grateful.*

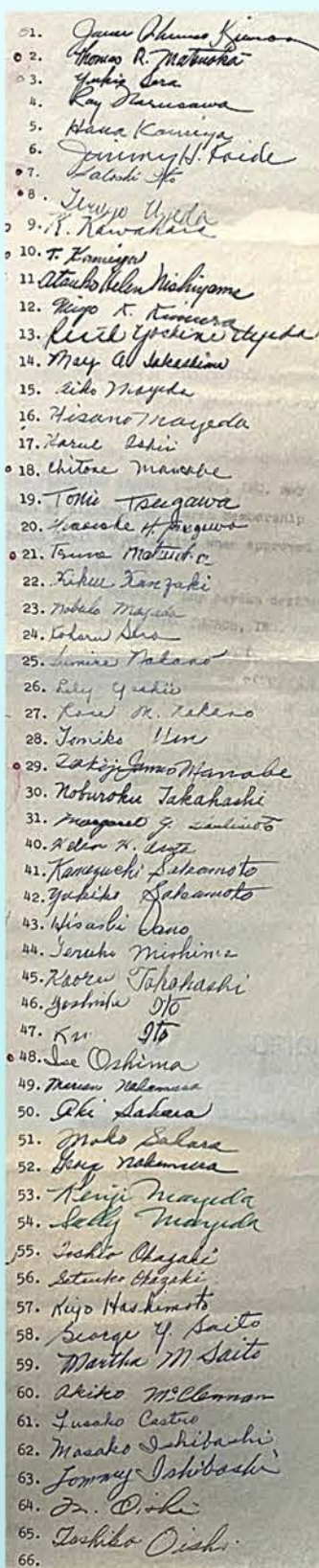
*Katsumi Hikido*





*Dedication Service*  
 CHRISTIAN LAYMAN CHURCH  
 1707 Ward Street, Berkeley, California  
 Sunday, July 6, 1958 2:30 o'clock P. M.

# 1952...



The Nisei enjoyed and benefited from the English services they experienced in the relocation camps. This led to CLC hiring its first English-speaking minister, Dan Shinoda, in 1950. He led the English worship service, mid-week English Bible studies, and participated in various church meetings from 1950-1955. During this period, the church grew in number (25-35 families), and in 1953, preparations were made to acquire a larger church building. In 1955, the lot (1707 Ward Street) next door to the church was purchased for \$3,500. In 1956, CLC became Christian Layman Church, Incorporated. The new chapel was completed in early 1958, and a formal dedication service was held on July 6, 1958. The building was completely paid off by 1963.



# 1952 - 1961

*"My ministry began in December of 1956. This was my first full time Pastorate and I was excited to be there.*

*I remember going Christmas Caroling with about twenty others. Kenji Maeda had a flatbed truck and we all climbed up and rode in it, going from place to place to share the carols with members of the church. I remember going up to beautiful Tilden Park to hold our Easter Sunrise Service. (I don't think we had to apply for a permit.)*

*Then after enjoying a breakfast somewhere, we returned to the church to have our Easter worship Service.*



*It was a few years after we were there that the Sanctuary was built on the adjacent lot. A member named Jim Kimura was the architect who designed and oversaw the construction. It was a welcome addition to our facilities.*

*One of my fondest memories was being invited on various occasions to Sunday dinner right after morning Worship Service, at member's homes. It was a real treat to enjoy a home cooked Japanese dinner, because for my first six months, I was still a bachelor trying to cook my own meals!"*

*Rev. George & Pat Toda*





# 1962...

The struggle to retain the legacy of lay leadership and independence from church denominations and yet to be responsive to all the various members' needs often required difficult decisions. In 1966, the church considered being affiliated with the Baptist denomination, but the decision was made to remain independent. Still new activities were introduced for the Sansei generation. Basketball teams were sponsored by the church from 1962-1982, and youth groups such as "Jesus Christ and Company" and the Young Adult Fellowship were also popular. There was also a Ladies Circle for the Nisei women, a ***Ha ha no kai*** for the Issei mothers, and a ***Shira yuri kai*** for young Japanese-speaking women.

The Issei beginnings established a model and legacy of lay leadership, of deep personal commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and of independence from church denominations. CLC had five Japanese and English speaking pastors during this decade: Mr. Matsuoka, Mr. Hara, Pastor Rutley, Pastor Meeko, and Pastor Masuno.



# 1962 - 1971







# 1972...

In 1971, at the Northern California JEMS (Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society) Conference dinner, Rev. Dan Shinoda (pastored CLC from 1950-1955) urged all churches to attend the Billy Graham Crusade in San Francisco. A women's basketball team started in 1972. The church celebrated its 50th anniversary (1972) with help from ten Japanese Christian churches. Pastors Kazuo Masuno, Alpha and Pam Goto led the church in this decade.

*"In the five years (1980-85) we were there, almost all the Issei men passed away. There were about 10 Issei women, 10 Nisei and about 10 Sansei. I had only two 3rd grade girls in my Sunday School class. There were a handful of children attending with their parents, or their grandchildren. Potlucks were wonderfully delicious events there. Almost every Sunday, the Issei women would make udon noodles for lunch and they taught us Sansei women to cook Japanese food.*

*Pr. Alpha Goto and Pr. Pam Odo Goto, were the pastors from 1979 -1982. They were the only Asian American/Japanese American, Sansei, co-pastors on record at CLC. After they moved on to another pastorate, CLC hired Pr. Rod Yee as an interim pastor. Meanwhile the board of deacons interviewed 12 different pastors for the senior pastor position. Our 12th applicant was Pr. Wayne Ogimachi. Several of us went to UCLA with Wayne; and others knew Wayne from the Agape Fellowship days. We all really felt the Lord leading us to hire him. He started in 1983. And that is when the church started to grow rapidly and attracted many young people."*

*Teresa Matsushima*



# 1972 - 1981

*"Having Pam and Alpha Goto as pastors was the beginning of some great fellowship with the college and young adults like us at the time. They set the example for loving and appreciating our elders. Prior to them Rev. Kazuo Masuno was the bilingual pastor with joint services primarily in English with short Japanese translation. The Issei and Nisei during the 70s, 80s were so kind and generous to*



*us younger folk. We sansei learned a few secrets of Japanese cooking and language...with delicious Japanese American potlucks, how to be generous, spending hours preparing their specialty foods, and being gracious to those around them. We really loved and appreciated the elderly Issei and Nisei."*

*Ellen Yano*





# 1982...

During this time, the worship services at Christian Layman remained in English with Japanese translations. Significant growth began to happen with the arrival of Pastor Wayne Ogimachi in 1983. Through Pastor Wayne's leadership, CLC made the transition of becoming an Asian American church, and his founding of Asian American Christian Fellowship (AACF) at the University of California Berkeley in the Fall of 1983 fueled growth at CLC with the influx of mainly Asian American college students. Shortly after, in December 1989, a trial for a modern English-only church started with 49 people. This was the beginning of a new ministry, "The Lord's Gate." By April 1992, "The Lord's Gate" had outgrown the Ward St. church. It moved out of Ward Street and into Bayview Fellowship Church. It met on Sunday nights, featured a casual service with modern worship songs, and was conducted in English. Not only did it meet the needs of the Sansei, but also appealed to other Asian American young adults in the area and quickly became a primarily Asian American congregation. Pastor Wayne Ogimachi provided the sermons for both the traditional services at Ward Street and the more contemporary services of "The Lord's Gate".



# 1982 - 1991







# 1992...

There was a lot of transition and growth during this decade. The Japanese newsletter ended in 1992. In 1994, the traditional morning service, having also outgrown the Ward Street location, leased the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church facility on Grand Avenue near Lake Merritt, and has been holding English-only Sunday morning services there ever since. "The Lord's Gate" grew more and moved from Bayview Fellowship Church to Sequoyah Community Church. In 1998, the two congregations merged back together as one service. to better steward limited resources, holding services at SDA. CLC had between 300-400 attendees at this time. The Ward Street church building was sold to Revelation Baptist Church in the early 2000s. The church building was generously sold below market to intentionally let another church continue to serve the needs of the local community.

CLC has been connected to the birthing of new churches for the kingdom of God. Pastor Wayne Ogimachi answered the call in 2000 to plant a new Asian American Church in Bellevue, WA. Likewise, Pastors Kevin Hayashida, Brian Owyong, and Winsome Wu began new churches in Southern California and the Bay Area in the 1990s and 2000s.



# 1992- 2001







# 2002...

Christian Layman Church continued to grow and expand its ministries, including Children's Ministry, under the leadership of our first Children's Ministry Pastor, Pastor Cheryl Gärlick. Other ministries included church retreats, our fellowship ministry; bone marrow drives; and the inception of our Eye Screening Ministry. Through the Eye Screening Ministry, CLC was also blessed with partnerships they formed with World Impact in West Oakland, Living Hope Neighborhood Church in Richmond and later, Regeneration Church in Oakland. This ministry allowed CLC to be a bridge for the local organization and its surrounding community.

Many pastors served at Christian Layman during this time: Pastors Winsome Wu, Roy Tinklenberg, Leslie Yee, Melvin Fujikawa, Cheryl Gärlick, Calvin Yim, and Andrew Huang. Our home-grown pastor, Andrew, started as a CLC Home Group leader before entering seminary. Upon graduation, he became an associate pastor for our youth. He heard God calling him to become our lead pastor in 2010 and remained in this position until 2021.



# 2002 - 2011







# 2012...

"Serving the world" is the third part of CLC's mission, "Love God, love people, and serve the world." Individuals' hearts were changed to love God's people despite any differences. We reached people in China, Cambodia, Naga India, Tijuana, and other far places as well as people in Richmond, and East and West Oakland. In 2021, we sent off our Lead Pastor, Andrew Huang, and his family to minister in Asia. CLC was able to expand its annual short-term mission trip, building houses in Tijuana (which started in the early 2000s), to include providing computer hardware, clothes, toys, food, and working with a local orphanage on various trips.

Our college and young adult ministries were able to meet the challenge of being a commuter church by using families' homes and the church office as meeting locations. Pastor Anh Truong started a college Facebook group and made use of ride-sharing (Über) to bring college students to church and CLC events.

It was also this decade that we said goodbye to many of our Niseis and seniors: Jake Chisaki, Satoshi Hashimoto, Mariko Koide, Sue Louie, Hisayo Nagatani, Marian Nakamura, Phyllis Tsukasaki, and Lily Yoshii.



# 2012 - 2021

"I remember in April 2017, I knew the moment I stepped in the church that this was the church I was going to [stick] with. I fell in love getting to know the people, God's Word, and the ongoing call to serve God. One of my favorite memories is going to TJ in 2018 and meeting the families & neighborhood kids. I still recall Will and Sammi playing with the kids, the crazy car bump with Gordon and Jared's car & becoming friends with Emi and Bruce Kaneshiro. I also enjoyed the study session at the church office, kinda studying for finals :D"

Deborah Chen



In 2017, my husband Jerry and I had visited the CLC church services just a couple of times. Soon after, we visited the

"Young at Heart" Home Group a few times. We both knew then that CLC would be a great spiritual home for us. We saw that God's Word and prayer were honored and we were warmly welcomed to be a part of it.

The Lord has provided genuine fellowship rooted in genuine and true relationships with God. We pray that God will continue to bless its small groups and may they continue to flourish.

Julie Lee





# 2022...

The entire world is in a season of change as we reckon with COVID-19 (2020), global economic impacts, wars, and social unrest as people speak out against racial injustice. CLC began new ministries to better serve the congregation and the world in these current times. Online services were successfully implemented due to the pandemic's health mandates. The Social Justice ministry was created to move the church towards justice work with the rise in Anti-Asian Hate, working with organizations to stop violence against women, and intentional partnerships with Black churches and nonprofits to foster improved racial relationships..

2022 is the 100th anniversary of the founding of CLC. God has been faithful throughout the years and generations. CLC is committed to mentoring the next generation to love God, love people, and to serve the world. We are excited to see how God will use CLC to bring hope to the world in future decades.



# 2022...

