



A Publication of the San Lorenzo Japanese Christian Church

"Growing together and reaching out in the love of Christ"

Firmly Rooted

Our Values

Serve Adore Nurture Learn Outreach

"Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him." Col. 2:6a

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Christmas Woes

Every Christmas Eve growing up, I remember being so excited that I couldn't fall asleep at a normal time. The thought of gifts lying under the tree waiting patiently for me wrought my young mind, tantalizing to the point of smiling pointlessly in the dark before finally falling asleep. Silly ain't it?

But of course, it isn't and wasn't just about the presents. The gifts were great but reflecting back on those times now, I realize those moments were some of the warmest my family and I shared. The happiness from my parents' and sister's faces emanated onto me then became imprinted on my soul. In turn, I hope I reflected it back onto them. Like a petri dish cultivating microorganisms, joy was cultivated between us.

I realize my experiences aren't normative. Many in the world didn't have the privilege of growing up in a family like I did and we ought to recognize our privilege. At the same time, I hope you have found similar moments in your life. Whether that's with blood relatives or friends deeper than blood, the Christmas season has a way of bringing folks together. But it's also one of the times of year that reminds us of the things and loved ones we've lost.

This has been a difficult year for many. The pandemic, humanitarian crises around the world, the polarizations of today's culture and their effects on relationships between us, our loved ones and communities, we all have our pick of the litter when it comes to troubles. This doesn't take into account the seasonal feelings of loss from remembering loved ones who have moved on that compound on top of our present worries. Yet even as we may feel hopeless at times, God still offers us hope.

"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved"
Ephesians 2:4-5 (ESV)

God Himself extends hope to those who formerly had none... that while we still chose to separate ourselves from fellowship with Him, God still reached out to us in the richness of His mercy and great love for us. We were once spiritually dead but by His grace we have been given new life together with Christ so that for eternity we may live together in a relationship with Him. We once were hopeless, but now we are hope-filled because Jesus has conquered our deaths.

Will this standalone verse make all of our pains and sufferings magically go away? No. I don't believe trite verse sharing has any significant impact on those in the throes of hopelessness. In fact, I believe it can be one of the most unloving things to do to the sufferer. What I do hope this verse accomplishes however is remind us there is a God who cares for us, a God who loves us so much that He died for us. There is a God who when we were once hopeless, gave us hope once and for all through Himself. I pray asking God would comfort you in this season, that as He gave you hope then that He would help give you hope now.

-- Pastor Joshua Scott

Randee's Faith Journey

My name is Randee and I have been coming to SanLo since I was seven years old. My testimony begins when my sister and I went to Vacation Bible School in July 2002. We had so much fun, made friends and kept coming back. Later that year my family went to the church's Harvest Festival. It was during the story time where I accepted Christ.

I learned that we are like pumpkins, different in size, shape, color, height and faces. But on the inside we are all the same, filled with icky sticky stuff called sin. The only one who could clean us from the inside out is God our Creator and He puts this light inside of you to shine His light out to the world. I raised my hand because "I wanted to be clean inside like a pumpkin, I wanted this light inside of me, I'm scared of the dark!" This was the foundation of my faith.

It says in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven." As time went on, I forgot about the latter part of that verse. I forgot about giving God the glory. I went through life thinking my faith and walk with God was consistently growing, but really it wasn't.

At first I wanted to get baptized before I got my first teaching job. I wanted to go into the workforce declaring my faith to the world. But I think God examined my heart and knew I wasn't ready. In my first year of teaching in Richmond, I tried to be a light on campus when I barely had any light to shine. I was tired, and frustrated, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. I was trying to do too much on my own. I was burnt out. He reminded me that as independent, stubborn, and relentless as I am, I need Him.

God made sure I had the time. I jokingly wished I took a gap year after college and in God's timing I got one. Last school year I was teaching enrichment classes on basketball - how perfect was that! He brought me back to something I love and helped me get to my fundamentals so to speak. I was able to shift my focus back on God. I became more involved with my small group bible study, did personal devotions and spent more intentional time talking with God, involving Him in my life. This prepared me for what came in 2020. Covid happened and I am relearning how to live with my parents all the time. I am helping take care of my mom with everything



Praise God for Randee Lee! Randee was baptized by Pastor Eric on Oct. 4 with her family present and the church family watching on-line. Randee also became a member of SanLo. What a joy and blessing – Nothing stops God's plans!

she's dealing with. I got a job in Oakland teaching k-2 P.E., but doing distance learning on zoom. There are so many things that are out of my hands that I have to have faith and trust in God.

It says in Philippians 4:4-7, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Anyone who knows me knows I am not that gentle but this verse reminds me that it's going to be okay. I might not understand everything going on or feel like anything is going right. But I've learned to lean on God and those around me during these times. Be thankful and let God cover you in love and peace.

I'll leave with this. In college I tried different churches, fellowships and bible studies, but nothing ever stuck with me because I was comparing it to SanLo. I came home so often I didn't need to find another church in Sacramento because I knew this was my home church.

SanLo has played such a huge role in my life and my family's life that I don't know where I'd be without this church family. I am so thankful to God who has given me everything I need and am truly blessed to have so much love and support from all of you.

-- Randee Lee

Grow SANLO Update

The Elders and staff feel deeply humbled by your giving especially last month's Pastors' Appreciation gift was tremendous as well as your continued support of our GROW SANLO campaign. We do recognize that you may have your own financial hardship, so please do not feel obligated to give. If you need assistance, please let us know as we have a crisis fund to serve those in need. **Thank you again for your faithful giving as we seek to be a gospel community of growth for every generation!**



COVID-19 Update: Reopening - Safety First!

The Elders are thankful that we can continue to meet together online through the benefits of technology. We are closely monitoring the latest updates from our governing officials as we have postponed our soft reopening for now. We are deeply committed to a safe and meaningful experience for everyone to worship our Lord Jesus Christ together.

In order to assure you of our dedication to safety, here are the essential steps we have taken to allow for in-person gatherings when it is appropriate.

- Submit to the local and state guidelines (1 Peter 2:13-17) and love our neighbors.
- Purchased new tech for continued online services.
- Consulted our own health professionals and church leadership for guidance.
- Ensure touchless hand washing stations and hand sanitizer stations are ready for use.
- Secured professional cleaning services to disinfect and to clean both English and Nichigo sanctuaries and bathrooms every week.
- Purchased PPE equipment for volunteers.
- Upgraded the air filters in the ventilation system.
- Spaced out the seating chairs beyond the six-foot requirement.
- Implemented safety protocols - temperature reading, health questionnaire, and health waiver to be completed.

We long for the day when we can meet back together in person, so please look for our latest updates in service or through our weekly updates in order to be informed when we will reopen. Praying for you all to be healthy and safe.

In His Care,

Pastor Eric, on behalf of the Elders

Christmas Celebration!

You are invited to our Virtual Christmas Celebration on Sat., Dec. 12, 7-8 p.m.. Please join us on Zoom for a time of fellowship, praise singing, a slideshow, puppet show, and a special Christmas devotional! Look in your email box for how to register.

**For registration questions, please contact Helen Lee-Takaki at hleetakaki@gmail.com.
For any other questions, please contact Kimi Yee at kimiutsumiyee@gmail.com.**

Rev. Eric Yata, Pastor (English)
Rev. Brian Tekawa, Marriage/Family Pastor
Pastor Joshua Scott, Young Adult/Worship Pastor
Pastor Scott Shimada, Youth Pastor

Rev. Sunao Shimada, Pastor (Japanese)
Tomoko Shimada, Director of Christian Education
Atsuko Smart, Administrative Assistant

Stan Naruo, Church Administrator
Kathy Tekawa, Communications Administrator

Office: English – (510) 483-9455 Japanese – (510) 483-9470

E-mail address: SLZJCC@SLZJCC.ORG

Website: www.slzjcc.org



Like us on our Facebook Page!

Any newsbriefs or articles for "Firmly Rooted" should be at the church office by the second Sunday of each month.

San Lorenzo Japanese Christian Church
615 Lewelling Blvd.
San Leandro, CA 94579

Dated Material
Week ending Nov. 20, 2020

Newsbriefs

* After each Sunday worship service, there is a **Zoom prayer and fellowship time**. All are welcome to join in by following the worship service reminder email sent out each week. If you do not receive it, request it from Pastor Josh at josh@slzjcc.org.

* Tune into **SanLo Together Podcast!** "SanLo Together" is about growing and walking together even as we are physically apart. We'll visit with staff, members, and others in our community to hear each other's stories, learn from God's Word, and just grow! You can find us at the link below or on Spotify. Check it out! <https://anchor.fm/sanlo-together>. Questions? Contact Chris Wu.

* Every year our church has participated in **Operation Christmas Child**. Although we are not collecting shoebox gifts at the church, there is still an opportunity to send a gift to a child in need. You can send a donation or build a shoebox online! Go to: www.samaritanspurse.org. Let's continue to send God's love to children in need around the world!

New Deacon!

We praise God for Patti Okui, who will serve on our Board of Deacons in a new position called, Deacon of Care.



Our Board of Deacons

Joshua Lee - Operations (Chairman)
Helen Lee-Takaki - Evangelism
Richard Shinoda - Worship
Emi Sarena/Betty Nakasone - Christian Ed. (Children)
Justin Louis - Christian Ed (Adults)
Kimi Yee - Fellowship
Patti Okui - Care
Stan Naruo - Missions
Cary Mitsuyoshi - Treasurer

Please keep all of our Deacons in prayer as they serve the Lord.